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PARTISAN REVIEW

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NOTES

The American stage version of **PETER WEISS's "The Investigation"** is directed by Ulu Grosbard (one of the translators of the complete text which Atheneum is putting out, and from which our selections are taken). The play opened October 4 at the Ambassador in New York. . . . **TONY TANNER** is a fellow of Kings College, Cambridge, and University Lecturer in the Faculty of English. His next book, he tells us, "will be about very contemporary trends in American writing." . . . Farrar Straus is bringing out **Near the Ocean, ROBERT LOWELL's** new book of poems, later this year. . . . **"Runaway"** is an excerpt from **WILLIAM STYRON's** new novel, **The Confessions of Nat Turner,** which Random House will publish next year. "It is based," Mr. Styron says, "on the life of a Negro who in 1831, in a remote region of southeastern Virginia, led the only effective and sustained revolt in the history of American slavery." . . . **CLAUDE LEVI-STAUSS's** latest book, **Mythologiques: Le cru and le cuit,** elaborates some of the questions considered in **"The Culinary Triangle."** Chicago is putting out a translation of M. Lévi-Strauss's **The Savage Mind** this winter. . . . Oxford brought out **ROBERT GARIS' The Dickens Theater** last year. Mr. Garis teaches English at Wellesley. . . . **MARTIN DUBERMAN** teaches history at Princeton. Houghton Mifflin is putting out his biography of James Russell Lowell in November. . . . **MORRIS DICKSTEIN** is teaching English at Columbia. . . . **E. M. CIORAN** is a Rumanian philosopher who lives in Paris and writes in French. He has written five books, the third of which, **The Temptation to Exist,** will be published next year by Quadrangle in Richard Howard's translation.

We're not running reviews in this issue, for lack of space. There will be an expanded BOOKS section in the Winter number.

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Richard Poirier

WORLDS OF STYLE

The most interesting American books are an image of the creation of America itself, of the effort, in the words of Emerson's Orphic poet, to "build therefore your own world." American writers who make this effort are, in one sense, only doing what writers, especially in the romantic tradition, have always done. To "enclose" the world, as Emerson puts it, so that "time and space, liberty and necessity, are left at large no longer," is to do no more in Concord than has already been done in Coleridge's lime tree bower. But such images have a recognizable uniqueness when they occur in American books. They are bathed in the myths of American history; they carry the metaphoric burden of a great dream of freedom—of the expansion of national consciousness into the vast spaces of a continent and the absorption of those spaces into ourselves. Expansive characters in Cooper or Emerson, Melville, James or Fitzgerald are thus convinced as if by history of the practical possibility of enclosing the world in their imaginations. It is as if the conventions of English romantic poetry could in America take on the life of prose, assume a reality that even history might recognize and that novels could report as news. Let us for the moment assume with Hegel that "freedom" is a creation not of political institutions but of consciousness, that freedom is that reality which the consciousness creates for itself. The assumption makes it more understandable that the creation of America out of a continental vastness is to some degree synonymous in the imagination with the creation of freedom, of an open space made free, once savagery has been dislodged, for some unexampled expansion of higher human consciousness.

I shall accordingly treat books and paragraphs of books as scale

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models of America. For if in American history some ideal national self has had to contend from the outset with realities of time, biology, economics and social custom, so in American literature the individual self has had to struggle into life through media of expression shaped by these realities. My demonstrations involve none of the usual connections between historical events and literary events, since I question the possibility of knowing what these are in relation to one another. Instead, I propose to measure this struggle for consciousness, personal and national, within the language of particular works. Sometimes, as in Cooper, the existence of the struggle is evident mostly in absurdities of style; at other times, as in Emerson, the struggle is merely evoked rather than made, as in Thoreau, the very substance of metaphor. Mark Twain tries to avoid the struggle, Huck Finn gets him into it, but he then drops Huck as a subject of interest in the very book named for him and turns his attention to a survey of the environmental forces within which not even a confused consciousness of freedom, like Huck's, can possibly come to full life. Later, Dreiser will derive his creative energy from a kind of fascinated surrender to the mysterious forces that in the City destroy freedom and even any consciousness of its loss.

The books which in my view constitute a distinctive American tradition within English literature are early, very often clumsy examples of a modernist impulse in fiction; they resist within their pages the forces of environment that otherwise dominate the world. Their styles have an eccentricity of defiance, even if the defiance shows sometimes as carelessness. Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, James—they both resemble and serve their heroes by trying to create an environment of "freedom," though as writers their efforts must be wholly in language. American books are often written as if historical forces cannot possibly provide such an environment, as if history can give no life to "freedom," and as if only language can create the liberated place. The classic American writers try through style temporarily to free the hero (and the reader) from systems, to free them from the pressures of time, biology, economics and from the social forces which are ultimately the undoing of American heroes and quite often of their creators. What distinguishes American heroes of this kind from those in the fiction of Mrs. Wharton, Dreiser or Howells is that there is nothing within the real world, or in the systems which dominate it, that can possibly satisfy their

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aspirations. Their imagination of the self—and I speak now especially of heroes in Cooper, Melville, James—has no economic or social or sexual objectification; they tend to substitute themselves for the world. Initially and finally at odds with "system," perhaps their best definition is Henry James, Sr.'s description of the artist as hero. In a passage where he affirms a parallel between the writer, struggling to express himself in language, and the defiant hero, contending with the recalcitrant materials of reality, the artist is described as "the man of whatsoever function, who in fulfilling it obeys his own inspiration and taste, uncontrolled either by his physical necessities or his social obligations." The artist-hero may be, as he often is in American literature, an athlete, a detective or a cowboy, his technical skills being as disciplined as the skills of art.

James's description might as easily come from Emerson, specifically from his essay "The Poet." It reflects a transcendentalist idea of style—not that style should mediate between the self and society but that it should emanate from the self as a leaf from a tree, expanding itself naturally to nourish, color and become the world. Emerson himself, as "transparent eyeball," is only the first of the many similar figures in American literature who thus "swell" into shapes or defy the realities of space and time.

In works where this expansion of self occurs there is less a tendency to criticize existing environments—for that one would read Howells or Sinclair Lewis—than an effort to displace them. So that even at the moment of worldly defeat the hero has managed to create, like the exiled Coriolanus, at least the illusion of "a world elsewhere." Works like *Moby Dick* or *The Ambassadors,* for example, are designed to make the reader feel that his ordinary world has been acknowledged, even exhaustively, only to be dispensed with as a source of moral or psychological standards. They are written so as finally not to be translatable into those standards, and their extravagances of language are an exultation in the exercise of consciousness momentarily set free. We can say of two American writers as different as Melville and James that both are quite willing, for themselves and for their heroes, to accept the appearance of failure in the interests of this free exercise of consciousness.

To make an environment in language that thwarts any attempts to translate that language into the terms of conventional environments is to write with a complexity that few even now are willing to allow

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to the novel or to any kind of prose. Indeed it is significant that most adverse criticism of, say, Melville or James displays a marked failure to give requisite attention to the demanding styles by which these writers create an imaginary environment that excludes the standards of that "real" one to which most critics subscribe.

I am making a distinction between works that create through language an essentially imaginative environment for the hero and works that mirror an environment already accredited by history and society. This distinction is usually explained, more often than not explained away, by saying that the first kind of environment belongs to the romance and that the second belongs to the novel. Hawthorne provides, in his Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables,* the *locus classicus*:

> When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former—while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he thinks fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially, to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime even if he disregard this caution.

Sorted out for us here are the two kinds of fictional environment I have been trying to describe: one might be called the provided environment, the other an invented environment. But it is regrettable that Hawthorne chose to elevate distinctions about environment, which is after all only one aspect of fiction, into distinctions between genres. Use of the terms "romance" and "novel" have in fact pre-

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vented rather than encouraged serious consideration of the American obsession with inventing environments that permit unhampered freedom of consciousness. Obsession is not too strong a word if English fiction is brought in for contrast. One of the first English novels comparable to the American fiction of civilization and the frontier is *Robinson Crusoe,* but it is indicative of the American emphases of Cooper, of Mark Twain, of Thoreau (though Thoreau gives a whole chapter of *Walden* to bourgeois considerations of economy) that Defoe's novel is a sort of idyllic parable of man's gaining merely economic control over an environment out of which he *could* try to make anything he chose. A true born Englishman, he has no interest whatever in the merely visionary possession of landscape. This comparison suggests what is, for other reasons, too, an inescapable conclusion: the strangeness of American fiction has less to do with the environment in which a novelist finds himself than with the environment he tries to create for his hero, usually his surrogate.

There is an evident reluctance on the part of American writers to admit that they intend to promote eccentricity both in the heroes of their works and in the environments provided for them. It is as if our writers wanted, in commenting on their own work and on the works of one another, to hide what they most wanted to do, and to hide their true intentions under disingenuous complaints that they are victims of historical necessity. They ask us to believe that the strange environments they create are a consequence not of their distaste for social, economic and biological realities but of the fact that these aren't abundant enough in American life. Cooper, Hawthorne, James, and commentators who follow them, all suggest that they would be happier if the social "texture" of American life were "thicker" even while they make every sort of literary effort to escape even the supposedly thin "texture" which American society does provide. In the passage from Hawthorne, in similar passages from Cooper and James, the talk about "romance" is always connected with the supposition that America could not provide an environment which sustained American novelists. "This country," Cooper writes in his Preface to *Home as Found,* "in its ordinary aspects, probably presents as barren a field to the writer of fiction, and to the dramatist, as any other on earth; we are not certain we might not say the most barren. . . . It would be indeed a desperate undertaking, to think of making anything interesting in the way of a *Roman de Société* in this country." And it

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is from such arguments that American writers and critics have made the by-no-means necessary extrapolation that Americans of genius were forced to write romances rather than novels.

The categorization of American fiction into novels, and, more numerously, into romances, even when the categories are made subtle by Richard Chase in *The American Novel and Its Tradition,* has tended to obscure the more challenging questions: are not certain kinds of experience much harder to put into language than other kinds? Are there not some states of consciousness that resist dramatic formulation, regardless of the genre in which the effort is made, because in dialogue or in actions they automatically become "like" some conventional states of consciousness that are less transcendental than perverse? When scenes occur in American literature that by standards of ordinary life are foolish, preposterous or sexually irregular they are usually interpreted in one of three, all relatively unsatisfactory, ways: they are translated into psycho-sexual terms with the implication that because we have thereby discovered something covert we have therefore revealed "more" than the obvious, idealistic or ideological reading. Or they are discussed merely as metaphoric expressions of one or another recurrent myth in romantic or American literature, with little, usually no attention to the fact that the expression of this myth often *does* unwittingly raise questions about sex and psychology. Or they are much more simply disposed of with the observation that after all they belong to a romance, since of course they could not have occurred in a novel.

All three procedures, but noticeably the last, have the same basic deficiency: a tendency to treat experiences in fiction as if somehow they existed independently of the style which creates them and which creates, too, the environment in which these experiences make or do not make sense. It is as though we apprehended these experiences not through the media of language at this particular point or at that one, but within the baggy categories of "romance," or "myth," "realism" or "naturalism." The crucial problem for the best American writers is to evade all such categorizations and to find a language that will at once express and protect states of consciousness that cannot adequately be defined by conventional formulations even of more sophisticated derivation from Marx, Freud or Norman O. Brown. The problem is stylistic. Quite locally so in the sounds and shapes of

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words. Genres have no instrumentality for expression, especially those of "novel" and "romance." These so-called genres have none of the ascertainable conventions of style that can legitimately be associated with such genres as the pastoral or the epic. One can see and hear language, see and hear the struggle in a voice to find a language appropriate to some mysterious state of consciousness; but no one has ever seen or heard language that necessarily belongs to a novel rather than a romance.

Once beyond the superficiality of genre criticism and the limitations of other more sophisticated categorizations, what is most interesting in American literature is the attempt in the writing to "build a world" wherein, say, even drunkenness might be the rule of the day. I mention drunkenness not only because it is a fairly common way of at least temporarily modifying one's relationship to customary environment. It is also William James's example when he is discussing in *Varieties of Religious Experience* a problem in life much the same as the problem I am considering in literature:

> Inner happiness and serviceability do not always agree. What immediately feels most "good" is not always most "true," when measured by the verdict of the rest of experience. The difference between Philip drunk and Philip sober is the classic instance in corroboration. If merely "feeling good" could decide, drunkenness would be the supremely valid human experience. But its revelations, however acutely satisfying at the moment, are inserted into an environment which refuses to bear them out for any length of time. The consequences of this discrepancy of the two criteria is the uncertainty which still prevails over so many of our spiritual judgments. There are moments of sentimental and mystical experience . . . that carry an enormous sense of inner authority and illumination with them when they come. But they come seldom, and they do not come to every one; and the rest of life makes either no connection with them, or tends to contradict them more than it confirms them. Some persons follow more the voice of the moment in these cases, some prefer to be guided by the average results. Hence the sad discordancy of so many of the spiritual judgments of human beings. . . .

According to William James there is a necessary discontinuity between revelatory moments, always sporadic and infrequent, and the

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"environment" in which people ordinarily pass their time. In discovering the nature of environment, in life or in a book, we must, taking a hint from this passage, look not only at the way space is filled but also at the way time is customarily measured. The proportions of time authorized for any given activity, like getting drunk, are as important as "place" to our understanding of environment.

Though James is talking about careers in life, of Philip drunk and Philip sober, what he implies is still more decisively true of books. In literature environment is usually discussed in terms of place, or a social class or a historical situation. This is a convenience too pleasant to give up. But it is only a convenience and it necessarily confuses what the books truly offer. As I use the word "environment," it means not the places named in a novel, like Chicago, let us say. Environment refers instead to the places filled in a book, filled with words that might indeed pretend to describe Chicago, but which in fact set a boundary on a wholly imaginary city in which the community of language shared by reader, characters and author necessarily limits the possible shapes that action, persons and language itself can assume. Nor does environment in a book mean, except in a most superficial sense, a time when events occur, be it 1966 or 1914. As I use the word "environment" with respect to a particular work, I mean the *proportions* of time that a writer feels he can give to some as against other kinds of events. In this sense, environment is really a derivative of such technical accomplishments as pacing and intensity, the weight of language at some points rather than at others. Why is it that often we remember vividly a particular scene that upon inspection turns out to have lasted only a few pages in a book of several hundred? From the answer to such a question we can discover that a writer could only give to moments of greatest illumination in his book, moments at which he seems to expend his genius most authentically, a small proportion of time and space as against what he felt required to give to "the rest of life."

Thinking of environment in American books as comparative units of space and time, a reader makes an obvious and very poignant discovery. What we remember about a book or a writer—and this is notably true in American literature—is often the smallest, momentary revelations that nonetheless carry, like the mystical experience to which William James alludes, an "enormous sense of inner authority." Much

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of this book is given over to a close look at such "passages" (the term "passages" could not be more apt) and to examining why they sometimes exist, with relation to the rest of the books in which they occur, much as do James's drunken or mystical experiences when these are "inserted into an environment which refuses to bear them out for any length of time." The rest of life, like the rest of a book, "tends to contradict them more than it confirms them."

The greatest American authors really do try, against the perpetually greater power of reality, to create an environment that might allow some longer existence to the hero's momentary expansions of consciousness. They try even when they are sure of failing, as Hawthorne was; they struggle for years in the face of failure, as Mark Twain did with his finest book, and as Melville did with most of his; and when they succeed, as James sometimes does, it is only that they may then be accused of neglecting the "realities" of sex, economics or social history.

A novel as familiar as *Huckleberry Finn* is perhaps illustration enough of the problem of environment. Briefly, the book creates two environments for the hero: the raft and the shore. The environment of the shore is an investment in history and locale; Jim and Huck's few moments on the river, before they are joined by the King and the Duke, are a retreat from history; they are quite literally out of place and beyond economics. To remember the novel is spontaneously to remember the raft scenes, and yet looking back at the text we discover that the space and time given the scenes on the raft constitute less than a tenth of the whole, and that even on the raft Huck's mind is contaminated by the values of the shore. What Mark Twain discovered at the point of his famous and prolonged difficulties after Chapter XV was that even his limited effort to create an environment alternative to the shore had made his task impossible. He must, finally, "insert" Huck back into his customary environment. He must, in effect, destroy him. Huck as a character, created mostly in his soliloquies up through Chapter XV, is replaced by another figure, using the same name, but able to exist within the verbal world of the last two thirds of the novel, a world demonstrably different from the verbal world or environment in the first third. *Huckleberry Finn* is a kind of history of American literature and it is altogether superior to most of what passes for histories of American literature. It is superior because it brings

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within its covers a conflict too often discussed as if it merely split American fiction, or the works of American writers, down the middle. On the one side we have the "romantic," and on the other we have the "realistic" or "naturalistic" schools. None of the interesting American novelists can be placed on either side of this dichotomy. Nearly all of them are writing in protest against the environment of the "rest of life" which contradicts the dreams of their heroes and heroines. The distinction to be made is between those whose protests sometimes take the form of creating in their works an alternative environment, as James and sometimes Faulkner have tried to do, as Mark Twain for a while did do, and those for whom the environment of the real world simply overpowers, as it does in *Huckleberry Finn,* any effort of the imagination to transcend it. In this case the imagination, as in the novels of Dreiser and Edith Wharton, can only reproduce the effect of environment as force.

II

The idea that through language it is possible to create environments radically different from those supported by economic, political and social systems is one of the sustaining myths of any literature. It is a myth in one sense because it is historically invalid: the enormous contrivances of style called forth by this effort are themselves an admission that the environment thus created has an existence only in style. Not God, not religion, not reality, history or nature, but style is its only authority. It is a myth in another sense because writers do want to believe, repetitively, despite history and their own experience, in the transcendent power of their own stylistic enterprise. The repetition and persistence of this myth has been especially evident in American literature for the obvious reason that for the only time in history men could, with the prospects of a new continent, actually believe in their power at last to create an environment congenial to an ideal self. American literature is thus full of images equivalent to the frontier; as Edwin Fussell shows, Walden is the West for Thoreau. On the pond he can build an environment for himself in which not only wilderness but also the civilizing technologies are made subservient to him. *Walden* is only one of the examples of something like an obsession in American literature with plans and efforts to build houses, to appropriate space to one's desires, perhaps to inaugurate therein a dynasty that shapes time to the dimensions of personal and

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familial history. Most of the houses in Cooper answer these ambitions, as does the Grangerford house in *Huckleberry Finn,* the House of the Seven Gables, Fawns in James's *Golden Bowl,* Sutpen's Hundred in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!,* Silas Lapham's house, Gatsby's estate, and even the remade country house of Bellow's *Herzog.* Coincident with some of these are the American theorists of housing and of space, Horatio Greenough, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright and that great historian of space, power and architecture Henry Adams.

The building of a house is an extension and an expansion of the self, an act by which the self possesses environment otherwise possessed by nature. By an act of building, so the theorists I've mentioned would have it, it is possible to join forces with the powers of nature itself, to make its style your style. But this conjunction is possible only if the imagination and space are freed from the possessive power of all that is not nature: from systems of any kind that derive from society and history, from, often as not, "Europe."

From the outset American writers (or architects) who wanted in America to create environments in concert with the formative powers of nature found that they had first to rid themselves and America of styles imposed upon them by history. Even the men who dispossessed the Indian could only possess, could only *see* America through the styles and instrumentalities of the old world. According to Faulkner's Isaac McCaslin, the land was

> "already tainted even before any white man owned it by what Grandfather and his kind, his fathers, had brought into the new land which He had vouchsafed them out of pity and sufferance, on condition of pity and humility and sufferance and endurance, from that old world's corrupt and worthless twilight as though in the sailfuls of the old world's tainted wind which drove the ships—. . ."

"Possession" and "dispossession" find their greatest contemporary expression in *The Bear,* where the hero rejects both his historical and his economic inheritance so that he might live in an environment where time (his relation to family and family past) and space (the wilderness, and the plantation he is to inherit) are redeemed by his sacrifice of profit from either, his relinquishment both of a sexual and of an economic identity. In all respects he gives up the house of his ancestors.

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The images of housing, of possession and of achieving by relinquishment of one's inheritance some original relation to time and space—all these are parts of what we recognize in the characteristic career of American heroes and heroines. But all these images serve equally well to describe the activities of American writers and their relation to literary styles and conventions. Thus at the point in *Democratic Vistas* just before he claims that he "can conceive a community, today and here" where "perfect personalities without noise meet," Whitman complains, in a way almost tiredly conventional by 1871, that "of course, in these States, for both man and woman, we must entirely recast the types of highest personality from what the oriental, feudal, ecclesiastical worlds bequeath us, and which yet possess the imaginative and aesthetic fields of the United States."

Whitman's critical utterances are an example of how esthetic theories of literary independence and originality, the preoccupation of American writers from nearly the beginnings of our literature, are an analogue to the effort by American fictional heroes to free themselves from the conventions of historically rooted environments. Whitman in his poetry fashions a poetic style wherein as both writer and hero of the poems he can be the gregarious flirt and voyeur that he was. His is a style in which the "I" escapes the limited relations permitted in environments fostered by society and expands to include anything, which in his case means everything. In quite other ways, the same omniverousness is evident in the later James. There, the environment which is James's style—an extraordinary invention in the history of language—makes it natural for the author to have total entry into the consciousness of all of his characters. James's later novels have the quality of vast interior monologues with James playing all the parts at will. Thoreau's *Walden* is perhaps more explicit than any other American book about the connections between a defiant hero literally building a world of his own—this is also, of course, the subject of *The Golden Bowl*—and the writer who looks upon writing as analogous to building. Like Whitman, and like the later James, Thoreau *is* his style. His style is itself the hero of the book: it is in substance the writer's self, the various selves that he absorbs, and it is a mirror of the creative originality of the hero-poet.

Significantly, in none of these books, not even when they permit a dialogue, is there allowance made for a style that is not the characteristic style of the author. And I have purposely selected very familiar

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examples in fiction, prose and poetry. Necessarily, "perfect personalities without noise meet" in Whitman's charming picture: the only noise is the writer's own, speaking for everyone. The artist becoming "God" through his creative activity is an ambition implicit in the whole idea of creating environments where worldly distinctions among persons are of no consequence. "Spring" in *Walden* is a grotesque image of this process. It is an account of Thoreau's vision of the "excrementitious" flow of sand and vegetation in the season of rebirth and a vision of himself within this flow as "but a mass of thawing clay." Continually fluid, leading on to shapes not yet apprehended and never to be fixed, "nature," he observes, is the "artist who made the world and me." It is to nature as an artist that Thoreau joins his own plastic powers, his own activities as a poet-maker. That is what he means by a "living" artist: "the earth is not a mere fragment of dead history," he writes, "stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquarians chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede the flowers and fruit."

Here, as in Emerson's essay on *The Poet* and in his admiration for the author of *Leaves of Grass,* is an early form of an esthetic which is sometimes thought to be contemporary. It is an esthetic so devoted to the activity of creation that it denies finality to the results of that activity, its objects or formulations. Art is an action not a product of action. To be creative is to discover one's affinity with "God" and thereby one's superiority to the works of men. Emerson's "Poet," like that version of him who is Thoreau, therefore rejects even the solidity of his own constructions, of his own created environments. No wonder American writers have always been outspoken in praise of self-contradiction, of "whim" and repetition. Self-contradiction suggests the unfinished life within the always expanding frontiers of the self—"do I contradict myself?/very well then I contradict myself,/(I am large, I contain multitudes)"—while repetition allows for endless variations within single things. There are at least thirteen of Wallace Stevens' blackbirds as well as thirteen ways of looking at one of them, and the third of Miss Stein's roses is, by the very act of naming it, not the second and not the first. Even any so-called "American" style would be a prison, if we accept the dictate of Emerson that "every thought is also a prison; every heaven is also a prison."

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Something that in historically credited environments has a place and function is not even recognizable in that other environment of the artist which exists in a continually fluid state, continually transforming itself into new and mysterious forms. The notion has informed the most popular idioms about America. The metaphor of America as a melting-pot, for example, implies that the final product will, like Emerson's Poet, be a composite figure who "stands among partial men for the complete man." Emerson's Poet can have no established nationality; he is not imagined as having even a particular occupation, including the occupation of poet as we normally think of it. He is supposed to be simply and magnificently himself in whatever he chooses to do. The role of the artist is clarified a good deal by Emerson's friend and contemporary Henry James, Sr. in an almost unknown short lecture, already mentioned, in *Moralism and Christianity*:

> Who, then, is the perfect or divine man, the man who actually reconciles in himself all the conflicting elements of humanity? Is any such man actually extant? If so, where shall we find him?
>
> We find him in the aesthetic man, or Artist. But now observe that when I speak of the aesthetic man or Artist, I do not mean the man of any specific function, as the poet, painter, or musician. I mean the man of whatsoever function, who in fulfilling it obeys his own inspiration or taste, uncontrolled either by his physical necessities or his social obligations. He alone is the Artist, whatever be his manifest vocation, whose action obeys his own internal taste or attraction, uncontrolled either by necessity or duty. The action may perfectly consist both with necessity and duty; that is to say, it may practically promote both his physical and social welfare; but these must not be its animating principles, or he sinks at once from the Artist into the artisan. The artisan seeks to gain a livelihood or secure an honorable name. He works for bread, or for fame, or for both together. The Artist abhors these ends, and works only to show forth that immortal beauty whose presence constitutes his inmost soul. He is vowed to Beauty as the bride is vowed to the husband, and Beauty reveals herself to him only as he obeys his spontaneous taste or attraction.
>
> The reason accordingly why the painter, the poet, the musician, and so forth, have so long monopolized the name of

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Artist, is, not because Art is identical with these forms of action, for it is identical with no specific forms, but simply because the poet, painter, and so forth, more than any other men, have thrown off the tyranny of nature and custom, and followed the inspirations of genius, the inspirations of beauty, in their own souls. These men to some extent have sunk the service of nature and society in the obedience of their own private attractions. They have merged the search of the good and the true in that of the beautiful, and have consequently announced a divinity as yet unannounced either in nature or society. To the extent of their consecration, they are priests after the order of Melchisedec, that is to say, a priesthood which, not being made after the law of a carnal commandment, shall never pass away. And they are kings, who reign by a *direct* unction from the Highest. But the priest is not the altar, but the servant of the altar; and the king is not the Highest, but a servant of the Highest. So painting, poetry, is not Art, but the servant and representative of Art. Art is divine, universal, infinite. It therefore exacts to itself infinite forms or manifestations, here in the painter, there in the actor; here in the musician, there in the machinist; here in the architect, there in the dancer; here in the poet, there in the costumer. We do not therefore call the painter or poet, Artist, because painting or poetry is a whit more essential to Art than ditching is, but simply because the painter and poet have more frequently exhibited the life of Art by means of a hearty insubjection to nature and convention.

When, therefore, I call the Divine Man, or God's image in creation, by the name of Artist, the reader will not suppose me to mean the poet, painter, or any other special form of man. On the contrary, he will suppose me to mean that infinite and spiritual man whom all these finite functionaries represent indeed, but whom none of them constitutes, namely, the man who in every visible form of action acts always from his inmost self, or from attraction, and not from necessity or duty. I mean the man who is a law unto himself, and ignores all outward allegiance, whether to nature or society. This man may indeed have no technical vocation whatever, such as poet, painter, and the like, and yet he will be none the less sure to announce himself. The humblest theatre of action furnishes him a platform. I pay my waiter so much a day for putting my dinner on the table. But he performs his function in a way so entirely *sui generis*, with so exquisite an attention to beauty in all the details of the service, with so symmetrical an arrangement of

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> the dishes, and so even an adjustment of everything to its own place, and to the hand that needs it, as to shed an almost epic dignity upon the repast, and convert one's habitual "grace before meat" into a spontaneous tribute, instinct with a divine recognition.
>
> The charm in this case is not that the dinner is all before me, where the man is bound by his wages to place it. This every waiter I have had has done just as punctually as this man, which attests that in doing it, he is not thinking either of earning his wages, or doing his duty toward me, but only of satisfying his own conception of beauty with the resources before him. The consequence is that the pecuniary relation between us emerges in a higher one. He is no longer the menial, but my equal or superior, so that I have felt, when entertaining doctors of divinity and law, and discoursing about divine mysteries, that a living epistle was circulating behind our backs, and quietly ministering to our wants, far more apocalyptic to an enlightened eye than any yet contained in books.

The ease with which the elder James finds the artist in occupations as mundane as waiting on table is one indication that an essentially Emersonian concept of style involves much more than a standard merely of literary performance. Emerson himself remarks that "poets are thus liberating gods." Believing with James that poets "more than any other men, have thrown off the tyranny of nature," Emerson also used the title *Poet* to designate anyone of any occupation who in the exercise of it fully realizes the self or the selves that are in him. Emerson and Henry James, Sr. affirm what could in any case be inferred from the great American books: an identification of the writer, idealized as a liberator of consciousness, with the heroes of a more practical, worldly and physical achievement. These heroes may be men of "whatsoever function," but in a significant number of cases they too are "liberators." Deerslayer shows his daring mostly in freeing his friends and himself from captivity, so does Huck Finn and so too does Faulkner's Charles Mallison of *Intruder in the Dust*. The stories of Poe and of Melville are full of imprisonments and efforts at liberation, while James, like Hawthorne, evolved a style meant to liberate his heroes from those, like the governess in *The Turn of the Screw,* who would "fix," imprison or "know" others.

[*Continued on Page 631*]

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Peter Weiss

Scenes from THE INVESTIGATION

NOTE

In the presentation of this play, no attempt should be made to reconstruct the tribunal before which the proceedings of the camp trial took place. Any such reconstruction would, in the opinion of the author, be as impossible as trying to present the camp itself on the stage.

Hundreds of witnesses appeared before the court. The confrontation of witnesses and the accused, as well as the addresses to the court by the prosecution and the replies by the counsel for the defense, were overcharged with emotion.

Only a condensed concentrate of all that can remain on the stage.

This concentrate should contain nothing but facts. Personal experience and confrontations must be steeped in anonymity. Inasmuch as the witnesses in the play lose their names, they become mere speaking tubes. The nine witnesses sum up what hundreds expressed.

The variety of experiences can, at most, be indicated by a change of voice or bearing.

Witnesses 1 and 2 are witnesses who worked with the camp administration.

Witnesses 4 and 5 are female, the rest male witnesses from the ranks of the surviving prisoners.

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Each of the 18 accused, on the other hand, represents a single and distinct figure. They bear names taken from the record of the actual trial. The fact that they bear their own names is significant, since they also did so during the time of the events under consideration, while the prisoners had lost their names.

Yet the bearers of these names should not be accused once again in this drama.

To the author, they have lent their names which, within the drama, exist as symbols of a system that implicated in its guilt many others who never appeared in court.

THE SONG OF THE CAMP

III

4TH WITNESS: The more you managed to push down
whoever was under you
the more secure your own position was
I could see the whole face
of our Barrack-elder change
when she talked to a superior
She was cheerful and friendly then
and behind that you could feel her fear
Sometimes her supervisor
treated her like her best friend
and she enjoyed many privileges
But if the supervisor

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had had a bad night just once
then she would be done for
from one minute to the next
And she had already been through everything
she had seen her relatives shot down
she had been forced to watch
as they murdered her children
she had grown completely numb
like the rest of us
She knew
that once she went under
nobody would help her
and whoever took over
would go on beating
so she beat us
because she wanted
to stay on top at any price

5TH WITNESS: The question
of right and wrong
didn't exist any longer
The only thing that counted
was what was immediately useful
Only our masters could afford
to have moods
and even to show how moved they were
or to be sympathetic
and make plans for the future
The camp doctor Dr Rohde
let me work in his ward
He found out
we had gone to school in the same city
and asked me
if we hadn't perhaps met each other
at the Ritter
where he frequently stopped in
for a glass of wine
and I thought
Fine if that's the way you want it
I'll go along with you

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and so I reminded him of his youth
and he said
After the war we'll meet there again
for a glass of wine
Dr Mengele sent flowers to a pregnant woman
and the wife of the camp commander
sent her best regards
and a baby sweater she had knitted herself
to the children's barrack
where somebody had thought
it would be a nice idea
to paint dwarfs on the walls
and set up a sandbox
The paths to the crematoriums
were carefully raked after each batch
of prisoners had gone by
The bushes along the way were trimmed
and flower beds had been planted
in the grass that grew
over the underground chambers
Mengele used to arrive smartly dressed
his thumbs stuck in his belt
He would nod pleasantly to the children
who called him Uncle
before they were cut up in his laboratory
But there was another man I remember
His name was Flacke
Nobody starved to death in his ward
and the prisoners there all wore
clean clothes
I asked him once
Sir who are you doing this for
Someday
we will all have to be done away with
because not a single witness
can be left behind
He said
there will be enough of us here
who will find a way to prevent that

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PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Do you mean to say
that each one of the men in charge
could take a stand
against conditions in the camp
and change them

5TH WITNESS: That is exactly what I was trying to say

1ST WITNESS: Normal reactions
were possible only in the first few hours
After one had been there for a time
it was impossible
Once you fell into the routine
you were caught
and had to cooperate

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: As a doctor
you were assigned to prevent
the spread of epidemics

1ST WITNESS: Cases of spotted and typhoid fever
had broken out among some
of the camp personnel and their families
I was ordered
by the Health Institute
to report to the camp

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Then your presence there had nothing to do
with treating the prisoners themselves

1ST WITNESS: No

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Did you get an impression
of conditions in the camp

1ST WITNESS: Shortly after I arrived
the doctor in charge of the laboratory said
I realize this is all new to you
but it's not half so bad
We don't have anything to do
with the liquidation program here
and it's none of our business either
If after two weeks

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you decide you don't want to stay here
you can leave
With the intention to leave the camp
after two weeks
I went to work
A few days later
the chief camp doctor Dr Wirth
ordered me to take part
in the selections on the platform
When I told him
I don't want to have anything to do
with that
he said
You won't have much to do there
But I still refused

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: What happened when you refused

1ST WITNESS: Nothing
I didn't have to take part
in the selections

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Did you leave the camp
after your first two weeks

1ST WITNESS: No
I decided to stay after all
and see if I couldn't do something
about the contagious diseases
I felt that I could
at least in a few cases
prevent things
without exposing myself
As a result of my work the threat
of the epidemic was ended

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Among the camp personnel that is
Not among the prisoners

1ST WITNESS: Yes
That was my assignment

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JUDGE: You were at that time in charge
of the sentry units both within
and outside the camp
also for the guard units
attached to the work details
What did that involve
2ND WITNESS: My assignment was
to keep an eye on the guards
to see they carried out their charge
diligently and faithfully
JUDGE: What regulations were they under
2ND WITNESS: When a prisoner tried to escape
the guard was required to call out three times
before firing a warning shot
If the prisoner still didn't halt
he was to be shot
to prevent further flight
JUDGE: Were any prisoners shot
for this reason
2ND WITNESS: Not under my command
JUDGE: Did prisoners
run up against the electrically charged
barbed wires
2ND WITNESS: Not under my command
JUDGE: Did it ever occur
2ND WITNESS: I heard it happened sometimes
JUDGE: Did guard details
obey regulations
2ND WITNESS: As far as I know
Yes
On my word of honor
JUDGE: Do you know anything about cap shooting
2ND WITNESS: About what
JUDGE: Shooting caps
2ND WITNESS: I've heard about it
JUDGE: What did you hear
2ND WITNESS: They said
caps were thrown up
and then they shot at them

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JUDGE: Who threw the caps
whose caps
and who did the shooting
2ND WITNESS: That I don't know
JUDGE: What were you told then
2ND WITNESS: Yes
Well
A prisoner was ordered
to take off his cap
and throw it away
and then
Move
run and get your cap they'd say
and when he started to run
they'd shoot him down
JUDGE: And if he didn't run
2ND WITNESS: Then they'd shoot him too
because that was refusal to obey an order
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Were special rations
or special leaves granted
as a reward for
shooting prisoners attempting escape
2ND WITNESS: I never heard of that happening
I don't believe it either
To be rewarded for such behavior
would degrade a soldier's reputation
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: The court has in its possession
documents which show
that in a number of instances
sentries were rewarded for
shooting prisoners attempting escape
Furthermore lists of prisoners
shot while attempting escape
were posted and periodically
brought up to date
2ND WITNESS: That's news to me

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PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: According to our information
you are currently
director of an insurance company

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: We object to
these irrelevant interjections
by the prosecution

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: We take it for granted
that the witness
realizes the significance
of a signature

2ND WITNESS: Certainly

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: Some of these lists
bear your signature

2ND WITNESS: It's possible
that on some occasion
I had to sign as a matter of routine
I can't remember

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THE SONG OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SURVIVAL

II

3RD WITNESS: The power
of any member of the camp personnel
was unlimited
They were free
to kill
or to save
I saw Dr Flage standing by a fence
with tears in his eyes
looking at a trainload of children
being taken to the crematorium
He did nothing to stop me
from holding on to the files
of patients already selected
and thus preventing their death
Camp doctor Flage showed me
it was possible
to see the one living person
among the thousands
He showed me
that it would have been possible
to influence the course of the camp operation
if there had been others
like him

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: As a prisoner doctor
did you have the power to determine
for life or death
what happened to your patients

3RD WITNESS: I could occasionally
save a life

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COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Yet weren't you also required
to select patients to be killed
3RD WITNESS: There was nothing I could do
about changing the required quota
That was set by the camp administration
Still it was possible
to alter the lists
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: When it came to choosing
between one patient and another
what determined your choice
3RD WITNESS: We had to weigh
which of the two was more likely
to survive his illness
Then there was the far
more difficult question
which of the two would be useful
to the internal affairs of the prisoners
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Were some especially preferred
3RD WITNESS: Politically active prisoners
naturally stuck together
supported and helped each other
as much as they could
Since I belonged to the resistance movement
within the camp
I of course did all I could
to keep others in the movement alive
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: What could the resistance movement
accomplish in the camp
3RD WITNESS: The chief aim of the resistance
was to keep alive our sense of solidarity
Furthermore we documented
everything that went on in the camp
and buried our evidence
in tin cans

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COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Did you have any contact with partisans
or any connection with the outside world
3RD WITNESS: Prisoners assigned to factory work
could occasionally establish contact
with partisans
and they were able to give us reports
about the situation at the various fronts
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Were preparations made
for an armed rising in the camp
3RD WITNESS: We managed to
smuggle in dynamite later on
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Was the camp ever attacked
from the outside or by any groups inside
3RD WITNESS: In the last winter of the war
the special squads
that worked in the crematoriums
revolted
The revolt was unsuccessful
That was the only active attempt
From the outside
no attempt was made
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Did you ever request aid
through your contacts
3RD WITNESS: Reports on conditions in the camp
were smuggled out time and again
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: What did you hope would come
of getting these reports out
3RD WITNESS: We hoped for an air raid
on the gas chambers
or that the railroad tracks
leading
into the camp
would be bombed

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COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: When you saw
that you were left quite alone
every form of military assistance denied you
how were you able to sustain
your will to resist

3RD WITNESS: Considering our situation
it was resistance enough
just to keep alert
and never give up the thought
that someday there would come a time
when we could speak out
and tell what we had seen
and lived through

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: How did you
justify what you had to do
with the oath you had taken as a doctor

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY: We object to this question
which the defense has raised
solely to blur the distinction between
witness and accused
The accused killed of their own free choice
The witness was forced
to be present at the killings

3RD WITNESS: I would like to reply to the question
Those prisoners who
by their privileged position in the camp
managed to postpone their own death
had at least to some degree
defied their masters
In order to maintain the possibility of survival
they were forced
to give the appearance of cooperating
I saw that demonstrated very clearly
in the infirmary
I soon became bound to the staff doctors
not only because of our professional relationship

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but also through my complicity
in the workings of the camp system
Every prisoner
from those who held the most privileged positions
down to those who were dying
was part of that system
The difference between us and
the camp personnel was less
than what separated us from those
who were outside

COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Do you mean to say
there was an understanding
between the administration and the prisoner

3RD WITNESS: When we talk of our experience nowadays
with people who never were in a camp
there is always something
inconceivable to them about it
And yet they are the same people
who in the camp were prisoners and guards
Since such a great number of us
came into the camp
and since the number of those
who brought us there was also great
one would think that what happened then
would still be comprehensible today
Many of those who were destined
to play the part of prisoners
had grown up with the same ideas
the same way of looking at things
as those
who found themselves acting as guards
They were equally dedicated
to the same nation
to its prosperity
and its rewards
And if they had not been designated
prisoners
they could equally well have been guards

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We must drop the lofty view
that the camp world
is incomprehensible to us
We all knew the society
that produced a government
capable of creating such camps
The order that prevailed there
was an order whose basic nature we were
[familiar with
For that very reason
we were able to find our way about
in its logical and ultimate consequence
where the oppressor
could expand his authority
to a degree never known before
and the oppressed
was forced to yield up
the fertilizing dust
of his bones

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: We utterly reject
theories of this kind
theories that reflect
a completely distorted
ideological point of view

3RD WITNESS: It is true
most of the prisoners
spilling out of the freight cars
onto the platform
had no time to comprehend
what was happening to them
Baffled and speechless
they walked that final path
and let themselves be killed
because they understood nothing
We call them heroes
but their death was pointless
We can see them before us
these millions

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lit by searchlights
standing in a din of curses
and barking dogs
Today the outside world wonders
how they could have
let themselves be destroyed that way
We
who still live with these pictures
know that millions could stand again
waiting to be destroyed
and that the new destruction
will be far more efficient
than the old one was

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: Was the witness
politically active
even before being sent
to the camp

3RD WITNESS: Yes
It was our strength
that we knew
why we were there
It helped us
preserve our identity
But even that strength
sustained only a handful
to the moment of their death
They too could be broken

7TH WITNESS: There were 1200 of us
who were led off to the crematoriums
We had to wait a long time
since there was another shipment
ahead of us
I was standing a little to one side
A prisoner walked by
He was very young
He whispered
Get away from here

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I picked up my shoes and walked off
I went around a corner
There was another prisoner there
Where are you going
He asked
They sent me away
I said
Then come with me he said
So I got back into the camp

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: Was it that simple
you could just walk away

7TH WITNESS: I don't know how it was with others
I walked off
and went into the infirmary
The prisoner doctor asked me
Do you want to live
I said yes
He looked at me for a while
then he found a place for me there

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: And so you survived
your stay in the camp

7TH WITNESS: I came out of the camp
yes
but the camp is still there

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THE SONG OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SURVIVAL

III

JUDGE: The witness
spent several months
in women's Barrack Number 10
Medical experiments
were made there
What can you tell us about them
4TH WITNESS: [*Remains silent*]
JUDGE: The court can well understand
that you must find it difficult to speak
and that you prefer to remain silent
Yet we request you
to search your memory
for anything that may
shed light on the events
under consideration here today
4TH WITNESS: There were about 600 of us there
Professor Clauberg directed the research
The rest of the camp doctors supplied him
with the subjects he worked on
JUDGE: Could you describe the experiments
4TH WITNESS: [*Remains silent*]
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Does the witness
suffer from lapses of memory
4TH WITNESS: I have been ill
since my time in the camp
COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: What are the symptoms of your illness
4TH WITNESS: Dizzy spells and nausea
Earlier I had to throw up in the bathroom

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because it smelled of chlorine
Chlorine was poured over the corpses
I can't stand to be in locked rooms

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: No loss of memory

4TH WITNESS: I would like to forget
but I keep seeing it
I would like to have the number on my arm removed
In the summer
when I wear sleeveless dresses
people stare at it
and I always see the same look
in their eyes

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENSE: What look

4TH WITNESS: Scorn

JUDGE: Does the witness
feel she is still being persecuted

4TH WITNESS: [*Remains silent*]

JUDGE: What experiments
does the witness recall

4TH WITNESS: There were girls there
17 or 18 years old
They were chosen
from the healthiest prisoners
They were used for X-ray experiments

JUDGE: Could you describe these experiments

4TH WITNESS: The girls were placed
in front of the X-ray machines
A metal plate was attached
to their stomachs and buttocks
The X-rays were directed at their ovaries
which were burned out
Burns and running sores developed
on their stomachs and buttocks as a result

JUDGE: What was done with these girls

4TH WITNESS: Within the next three months

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they were operated on
a number of times

JUDGE: What kind of operations were these

4TH WITNESS: Their ovaries and gonads
were removed

JUDGE: Did the patients die

4TH WITNESS: If they didn't die during the experiment
they died soon after
After a few weeks the girls
had changed completely
They looked like old women

JUDGE: Could you
tell us if any of the accused present
took part in these experiments

4TH WITNESS: All the doctors came together daily
in their quarters
It would seem likely that at the least
they knew what was going on

COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: We strenuously object
to loose allegations of this kind
The mere fact that our clients
were in the vicinity when these events occurred
by no means
implicates them as accessories

JUDGE: Would the witness
tell us what other experiments were undertaken

4TH WITNESS: [*Remains silent*]

COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: It is our opinion
that because of the witness' obvious ill-health
she is incapable
of providing the court with credible evidence

PROSECUTING
ATTORNEY: Could you
describe for the court other experiments
which you witnessed yourself

4TH WITNESS: A syringe
with a tube attachment

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was used to inject a fluid
into the womb

JUDGE: What kind of fluid was it

4TH WITNESS: It was cement paste
that burned and hurt like labor pains
The women could only walk stooped
to the X-ray table
where a picture was taken

JUDGE: What was the purpose of the injection

4TH WITNESS: The fallopian tubes would be glued together
to prevent conception

JUDGE: Were the same patients
subjected to repeated experiments

4TH WITNESS: After the injection of the paste
a contract fluid
was injected for X-ray observation
Then the paste
was pumped in once again
This process
might be repeated many times
at three- to four-week intervals
Infection of the womb
or of the stomach lining
caused most of the deaths
I never saw anyone sterilize
medical instruments
between treatments

JUDGE: How many such experiments would you estimate
were carried out

4TH WITNESS: During the six months
I spent in Barrack Number 10
400
In connection with these experiments
there were others
in artificial insemination
If a woman got pregnant
an abortion was induced

JUDGE: In what month of the pregnancy was that done

4TH WITNESS: In the seventh month

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A variety of X-ray experiments were made
throughout the pregnancy
After the abortion
if by any chance the child was still alive
it was killed and dissected

COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: Are the witness' statements
based on hearsay
or on firsthand knowledge

4TH WITNESS: I speak from personal experience

COUNSEL FOR
THE DEFENSE: What saved you then

4TH WITNESS: The evacuation of the camp

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Tony Tanner

THE NEW DEMONOLOGY

> ". . . human aggregates disintegrating in cosmic insanity, random events in a dying universe."
>
> —*Junkie*

William Burroughs is an addict turned diagnostician, a victim of sickness now devoted to the analysis of diseases. He has lived a nightmare and, in a series of books, he is now transforming it into a vision. He has created a vivid and recognizable fictional universe and there is no doubt at all that through this he is concerned to convey a distinct series of warnings and prescriptions. Not for nothing do so many of his scenes revolve around doctors, surgeons, hospitals, sanitariums, etc. (common images in the fiction of this century); the possibilities of healing are a matter of real concern to his haunted, horror-struck imagination. The paradox of Burroughs the man—namely, an almost irresistible urge to explore ever more extreme forms of addiction counteracted by a fierce impulse for cure—has provided the vital impetus for Burroughs the writer. His work certainly deserves to be taken seriously and before considering its significance it is worth trying to outline the world he has created, to participate, as far as one can, in his vision.

It helps to start with *Junkie,* his first book, written in the early fifties under the name of William Lee (who remains his *persona* in later work). Burroughs now speaks disparagingly of this early work and it certainly bears little trace of the technical experiments which have absorbed him in more recent years. Yet its autobiographical candor and its uncomplicated narrative simplicity provide many

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clues for the surreal works which were to follow. For here we get some arresting glimpses of the real events and people later to be metamorphosed by his imagination; here is the actual in which his vision is grounded. Later, he made the business of drug addiction into a vast encompassing metaphor; in this book he looks at it, with a remarkable cool lucidity, simply as the dominant fact of his life. His childhood was spent "in a comfortable capsule, with a beautiful garden and cut off from contact with the life of the city." Life in the suburban vacuum only served to make city life seem more real and vital, while the dull respectability of his milieu seems to have engendered a sympathetic predilection for the outlaw, the deviant. At the same time, in this "empty" environment he sensed hidden antagonists and suffered bad dreams. It would seem that the disposition to horrific hallucination was there from the start. In describing the actual sequence of events leading to addiction, he stressed that it was mainly a matter of "not having strong motivations in any other direction." In his aimless wandering he drifted into it. This is worth noting: in the Burroughs world evil is not something you seek out or create—it is always there, waiting. And if you get involved with it, it takes you over.

This idea of dope (or any other vice) as a malevolent power which can move in on you recurs on an increasing scale throughout his work until, in *Nova Express,* it is a matter of a cosmic take-over. From the semi-hoodlum underworld of drug-trafficking which *Junkie* describes, Burroughs goes on to a war of the worlds. But if the scale has changed, the image was there from the start. Thus, for instance, he describes a "fag bar." "A room full of fags gives me the horrors. They jerk around like puppets on invisible strings, galvanized into hideous activity that is the negation of everything living and spontaneous. The live human being has moved out of these bodies long ago. But something moved in when the original tenant moved out. Fags are ventriloquists' dummies who have moved in and taken over the ventriloquist." In a similar way he describes one drug addict as having two selves: an alert, active conscious mind plus the other self composed of all the cells in his body inhabited by the need for junk. Need, as an all-else devouring state of body and mind, Burroughs also explored in later work. For need creates a sort of shameless subservience allowing an alien substance to drain the life out of you

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("junk takes everything and gives nothing"). And the people who live off other people's needs and addictions, even in the "realistic" world of this early book, are described as being peculiarly monstrous and repulsive. Thus one vague type who somehow lives off junk without actually selling it or taking it: "This man walks around in the places where he once exercised his obsolete and unthinkable trade. But he is unperturbed. His eyes are black with an insect's unseeing calm. He looks as if he nourished himself on honey and Levantine syrups that he sucks up through a proboscis."

The world into which Burroughs wandered in his flight from suburban unreality provided him not only with the sensations and sufferings connected with addiction and withdrawal; it introduced him to a whole gallery of living grotesques, to the unspeakable things that can happen to a human being. Subway Mike: "He looked like some specialized kind of underground animal that preys on the animals of the surface." Mary: "Her eyes were cold fish-eyes that looked at you through a viscous medium she carried about with her. I could see those eyes in a shapeless, protoplasmic mass undulating over the dark sea floor." Lee's friend, Bill Gains: "He was not merely negative. He was positively invisible." There are many others, most of whom seemed to have returned to some lower animal form of life. Not that the figures of ordinary society present an attractive alternative: faceless bureaucrats, stupid and bullying policemen, a lethal bore (who reappears in *Naked Lunch*), lifeless hospital patients, and a moribund psychiatrist who "was ready to take down my pysche and reassemble it in eight days." The "normal" world is scarcely more pleasing than the junk world.

While moving through those areas where "junk is often found adjacent to ambiguous or transitional districts . . . a point where dubious business enterprise touches Skid Row," Burroughs was absorbing the atmosphere and assembling the cast of his future work. He mentions other experiences which clearly contributed to the shaping of his fictional world: the continual "moving on"; rubbing along with dubious company but never establishing meaningful human relationships; feeling the police close in; moving through a dream world; the ever renewed search for "the Man" who can provide the junk; attempted cures at institutions like Lexington; and of course the various effects of junk itself. The junkie has a com-

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pletely fluid sense of place and lives in his own special "junk-time." "When his junk is cut off, the clock runs down and stops. All he can do is hang on and wait for non-junk time to start. A sick junkie has no escape from external time, no place to go. He can only wait." And the torments of deprivation are portrayed by the image of "the orgasm of a hanged man when the neck snaps" which becomes a veritable obsession in *Naked Lunch*. More important are the visions or hallucinations incident to his life as an addict. One of these foreshadows much of his later work: "When I closed my eyes I saw an Oriental face, the lips and nose eaten away by disease. The disease spread, melting the face into an amoeboid mass in which the eyes floated, dull crustacean eyes. Slowly, a new face formed around the eyes. A series of faces, hieroglyphs, distorted and leading to the final place where the human road ends, where the human form can no longer contain the crustacean horror that has grown inside it." Junk can induce an utter indifference to reality, an inertia, a flatness; at the same time it gave Burroughs horrific visions of apocalypse, chaos and unspeakable human metamorphoses.

If Burroughs' books drift with little sense of continuity this is a reflection of his own compulsive, seemingly purposeless traveling. Yet not quite purposeless. There was always the element of flight and evasion, the feeling of having to get out of the way of some gathering threat (the first words of *Naked Lunch*—"I can feel the heat closing in"—tell us a great deal about the whole book). And there was also the sort of inverted Holy Grail search for "the final fix." The last words of *Junkie* show Lee heading into South America in search of Yage. "Yage may be the final fix." If we next look at the *Yage Letters* written to Allen Ginsberg, we can see once again how the necessity of moving through strange alien territories in search of a new "fix" affected Burroughs' imagination. For one thing, it is inevitable that someone traveling with rather dubious motives through remote places in South America will run into a lot of trouble with all sorts of hostile bureaucracy. From these letters, it would seem that Burroughs often found himself suddenly confronted by the unpleasant powers of what he calls "cancerous control" (another metaphor he was to develop later). This fugitive, paranoid sense of being at the mercy of malevolent powers becomes part of the vision of his later books. And in turn it induces what he calls a "nightmare fear of

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stasis," most revealingly in the conclusion of his last letter in the series—from Lima. "Everybody has gone and I am alone in a nowhere place. Every night the people will be uglier and stupider, the fixtures more hideous, the waiters ruder, the music more grating on and on like a speedup movie into a nightmare vortex of mechanical disintegration and meaningless change. . . . Suddenly I wanted to leave Lima right away. . . . Where am I going in such a hurry? Appointment in Talara, Tingo Maria, Pucallpa, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico City? I don't know. Suddenly I have to leave right now."

The dread of inertia and arrest, the compulsion always to move on to unknown places, goes deeper than the surface drama of police-dodging and drug-hunting, and it is significant that when he wrote that last letter he had in fact found his yage, which proved no more final than the other fixes. Burroughs' "stasis horror" is really a vivid name for a larger preoccupation that runs deep in the American soul and its literature, its preference for life which is fluid, unshaped. Burroughs in this sense is a very American writer. What gives the special twist to his writing is where his movement-hunger took him. Huck Finn lights out for a mythic frontier; Augie March pauses for some rather forced laughter in the cold fields of France with no sense of final arrival. But Burroughs came to a very definite halt—"at the end of the junk line." "I lived in one room in the Native Quarter of Tangier. I had not taken a bath in a year nor changed my clothes or removed them except to stick a needle every hour in the fibrous grey flesh of terminal addiction. . . . I did absolutely nothing." The "stasis horrors" have, ironically, brought him to the horror of total stasis; the "nightmare fear" of being "stuck in one place" has been realized; and all that urgent movement has led to the dreaded state of absolute immobility. Unawares, he had been pursuing the inertia he sought to flee. And it was there, I think, that Burroughs made an important discovery—that under all the ostensible purposes of his traveling (search for yage, etc.), his movements had really been directed towards death. In a later interview he said: "I was living in Tangier in 1957, and I had spent a month in a tiny room in the Casbah staring at the toe of my foot. The room had filled up with empty Eukodol cartons: I suddenly realized I was not doing *anything*. I was dying. I was just apt to be finished." And it

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was at this point at the end of the line that everything that had been gathering in his memory and imagination throughout his fifteen years of addiction discharged itself into *Naked Lunch*. I think it is better to put it that way, suggesting the passivity and inertia of the author: Burroughs himself said that "I have no precise memory of writing the notes which have now been published under the title of *Naked Lunch*." Burroughs' realization that his long roving search for junk was ultimately a death quest or "death route"—"If all pleasure is relief from tension, junk affords relief from the whole life process"—lends an extra dimension to his use of addiction as a general metaphor for the various diseases of civilization. The incredible panorama of his book reflects a world to a large extent addicted to death. Death is the final fix.

Despite its nonsequential confusion, *Naked Lunch* can be approached once certain customary expectations have been laid aside. There is no chronological sequence, nor is there any coherent discrimination of geography and location. This timelessness and placelessness are attributes, not only of Burroughs' sick state of mind, but of the life he had lived. "You can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point," as Burroughs has said, and to an age which has read Proust, Joyce, Musil and others, there should be little difficulty in comprehending the hallucinations and nightmares which tumble around and explode in the consciousness of William Lee, a consciousness in the process of moving from sickness to cure. It is a book, as Burroughs said, to be read in Silence (an increasingly important commodity to him), the silence which prevails on the "Far side of the world's mirror" where Lee finally finds himself, having "killed" the cops who finally corner him. "The Heat was off me from here on out." And having made good his escape from our Time, Lee hints that he can catch a glimpse of the future: "a not-yet of Telepathic Bureaucracies, Time Monopolies, Control Drugs, Heavy Fluid Addicts." The nightmare yields a prophecy. As though having slipped out of the reality of the fifties, he suddenly saw 1984. Whether it was necessary to employ such a degree of randomness to convey his warning to the "dying universe" is another matter.

Moving through, or cutting into, the world of the book, what are the memorable features? For if the episodes do not reveal a plot, they congregate in the memory in such a way as to project a world.

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In the first section, about the hideous subworld of drug addicts, it is the horrible encroaching presence of informers, perverts and pushers that stands out most luridly—literal devourers of their victims. Willy the informer, for instance, "that blind, seeking mouth" who "would suck the juice right out of every junkie he ran down." Bradley the Buyer who has a "contact habit," a yen to assimilate other people into his foulness which "comes on him like a great black wind." In his spreading presence people disappear. "Like a vampire bat he gives off a narcotic effluvium, a dank green mist that anesthetizes his victims and renders them helpless in his enveloping presence. And once he has scored he holes up for several days like a gorged boa constrictor." A world of eaters and eaten. From such monsters William Lee flees across mournful, rancid dying landscapes which are sometimes parts of America, and sometimes anywhere in the world. This is the world of *Junkie* refracted through an imagination in the toils of nightmare.

With the appearance of Doctor Benway and his doings in Annexia and the Freeland Republic, a sort of black satire commences. Benway is both a figure of comedy and a figure of horror. He is a particular kind of inspired charlatan, a master of all methods of "assault on the subject's personal identity." In Annexia he had helped to develop the perfect police state in which all the citizens are maintained in a permanently demoralized condition, cowering "like neurotic cats." There is some straight satire on bureaucratic methods of demoralization: "Documents issued in vanishing ink faded into old pawn tickets. New documents were constantly required. The citizens rushed from one bureau to another in a frenzied attempt to meet impossible deadlines"; and various other ways are described in which citizens can be manipulated into losing all sense of their real identities. Benway (helped by Violet his baboon assistant) is also responsible for some of those wild parody operations which obsess Burroughs. In Freeland he runs a Reconditioning Center and works on Automatic Obedience Processing. It is the unintended release of the subjects of this center which precipitates one of those apocalyptic scenes of rampant perversion, unspeakable sadism, disease and destruction which recur throughout the book. Another ominous sanitarium episode follows giving way, as often happens, to a great landscape of decay.

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The next episode is a composite vision of the modern city, which is also a city of the damned. "Faces of The City poured through silent as fish, stained with vile addictions and broken lusts. . . . All streets of The City slope down between deepening canyons to a vast kidney-shaped plaza full of darkness." This generalized city is the cesspool of the modern world (almost the last words of the book are: "They are rebuilding the City. Lee nodded absently . . . 'Yes . . . Always . . .' "); and here again we find hideous images of devouring creatures. "Traffickers in the Black Meat, flesh of the giant aquatic black centipede," and more specifically, the Mugwumps and Reptiles whose human originals can be detected lurking in *Junkie*. "Mugwumps have no liver and nourish themselves exclusively on sweets. Their purple-blue lips cover a razor-sharp beak of black bone with which they frequently tear each other to shreds in fights over clients. These creatures secrete an addicting fluid from their erect penises which prolongs life by slowing metabolism. . . . Addicts of the Mugwump fluid are known as Reptiles. . . . A fan of green cartilage covered with hollow, erectile hairs through which the Reptiles absorb the fluid sprouts from behind each ear." Against these creatures the "Dream Police" are helpless and "disintegrate in globs of rotten ectoplasm." It is a hideous vision of the triumphant reign of life lived on the lowest, vilest, animal level. It is the Mugwumps, for instance, who organize one of those homosexual executions which proliferate throughout the book. A young boy is hanged, he has an orgasm, and is then buggered while dangling on the rope. After, "the Mugwump falls with a fluid, sated plop." The horror of all these scenes and beasts is real enough. Burroughs did not invent the Mugwumps—he must have seen them.

For most of the rest of the book we are in Interzone. The City of Interzone is "the Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market." It is full of violence, disease, perverted sex. Here is "the Meet Cafe" where every kind of distortion and degradation of the human potential congregate, where all diseases wait: "maladies of the ocean floor and the stratosphere, maladies of the laboratory and atomic war. . . . A place where the unknown past and the emergent future meet in a vibrating soundless hum. . . . Larval entities waiting for a Live One. . . ." Burroughs' evil is a "waiting" evil. Though the book is full of the most vivid

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and distorted images of the effects and workings of evil, there is an ominous blankness about the *source* of it. One passage alone offers a burst of sinister clarity on the problem. "America is not a young land: it is old and dirty and evil before the settlers, before the Indians. The evil is there waiting." Evil is a virus; it reduces people to the deplorable state of "total need." It is clearly something that ferociously works against independent, self-sustaining life; some hideous inexplicable impalpable pressure toward decay, disintegration, destruction and death. And where does it come from? "The evil is there waiting."

In Interzone we also meet some very amusing people, or rather we overhear some amusing voices (the world of the book is, as much as anything, a world of voices—not communicating, but talking all at once, all the time, to themselves—of which we hear unlocated scraps). We hear the Professor, the Prophet, the Party Leader bumbling on about "*Ordinary* men and women," some of whose complaints we then overhear. Like the American Housewife who protests that she is being sexually accosted by her kitchen gadgets; and the Hustler who complains that his customers want to take over his life ("they wanta merge with my protoplasm . . . they wanta take over my past experience and leave old memories that disgust me") and so on. It is a world best summed up by the story of the man who was taken over by his "asshole," which is not merely obscene, but a parable of matter in a state of hideous revolt. For the man is gradually covered by a jelly of Undifferentiated Tissue which seals off everything but his eyes—because the blind anus needs the eyes, but not the human brain behind them. It is in this world that the doctors talk about replacing the complexity of man with "one all-purpose blob."

Now this idea of matter returning to lower forms of organization—entropy—is at the heart of the book. All the various addictions break life down to a lower level (hence the recurring use of the word "ectoplasm"). The brain taken over by the anus is only a paradigm for all the low forms of life who devour higher forms of life throughout. Humans regress to animals, vegetables, even minerals. (In a later statement Burroughs said: "I felt that heavy metal was sort of the ultimate expression of addiction, that there's something actually metallic in addiction, that the final stage reached is not so

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much vegetable as mineral.") It is all a downward, deathward slide. It is no wonder then that, like Norman Mailer in a different context, Burroughs uses cancer as another crucial metaphor: the rampaging cells which destroy the helpless host. Thus: "Bureaucracy is wrong as a cancer, a turning away from the human evolutionary direction of infinite potentials and differentiation and independent spontaneous action, to the complete parasitism of a virus." Seeing evil as a virus, Burroughs makes a parenthetic comment that is nearly a key to the book. "(It is thought that the virus is a degeneration from more complex life forms. It may at one time have been capable of independent life. Now it has fallen to the borderline between living and dead matter. It can exhibit living qualities only in a host, by using the life of another—the renunciation of life itself, a *falling* towards inorganic, inflexible machine, towards dead matter.)" I imagine that Burroughs learned a lot of this lying and dying in the utter stillness of his room in Tangier. Looking through his own experience of addiction he now sees a world in which the forms of life are lived by the forces of death. This is the evil. And the evil was waiting in the land.

To summarize the diagnostic vision of the book I want to recall the different parties of Interzone. These are described in one of those passages of almost direct exposition or scientific observation which often occur between the abandoned, black-circus sort of high-jinks which make up much of the book. On one side there are the Liquefactionists, Senders and Divisionists—all in their various ways hostile and threatening to spontaneous individual life. The Liquefactionists dedicate themselves to activities of dissolution and absorption, while Senders believe in completely dominating people's minds by various methods of control, but they are "notorious for their ignorance of the nature and terminal state of sending." That is, they have no end values to justify their means of control. *"You see control can never be a means to any practical end. . . . Control can never be a means to anything but more control . . . like Junk,"* asserts a warning voice. The idea is broached that "ultimately the Senders will use telepathic transmitting exclusively" and of course the important thing about a Sender is that he must not "receive," "because if he receives that means someone else has feelings of his own," and that would "louse up his continuity." Theoretically "one Sender could control

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the planet." The Senders represent a nightmare of total, meaningless manipulation by mysterious forces from without.

The Divisionists, on the other hand, are a force making for mass homogeneity. They multiply in their own image, by making "replicas" of themselves, and of course "every replica but your own is eventually an 'Undesirable.' " A fairly straightforward satire on the forces of conformity in society (very similar to the theme of that arresting science fiction film, *The Body Snatchers*). The nightmare end of this process is that eventually there will simply be "one person in the world with millions of separate bodies." Again, it is a threat to all independent, differentiated forms of life. Part of the great drive toward the "one all-purpose blob." In opposition to these formidable forces there is only one party—The Factualists, who are against all the rest. They deplore the Divisionists because replicas are a "menace to life on this planet." More passionately they are against the Senders, because of their abuse of telepathy. "We oppose, as we oppose atomic war, the use of such knowledge to control, coerce, debase, exploit or annihilate the individuality of another living creature." They see the Sender as a sort of voracious void. "The Sender will be defined by negatives. A low pressure area, a sucking emptiness." Sending is "evil" irrespective of what is sent, since it annihilates spontaneous life and reaction. "The Sender is not a human individual. . . . It is the Human Virus (all viruses are deteriorated cells leading a parasitic existence . . . every species has a Master Virus: Deteriorated Image of that species). The broken image of Man moves in minute by minute and cell by cell. . . . Poverty, hatred, war, police-criminals, bureaucracy, insanity, all symptoms of the Human Virus. *The Human Virus can now be isolated and treated.*"

The forces of evil, then, work through Liquefactionists, Divisionists and above all Senders. And they are opposed by the Factualists. Presumably this party resists the other forces by undertaking a dispassionate scientific analysis of what is going on in the universe. ("It was only the intervention of the Factualists that prevented the Senders from putting Einstein in an institution and destroying his theory.") This would tie in with Burroughs' own interest in science, and the cool way in which he now assesses and describes his experiences with all types of drugs. The paper he wrote for *The British Journal of Addiction* (see the appendix to *Naked Lunch*) is the deposi-

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tion of a Factualist. Perhaps we should see him as a Factualist who almost succumbed to the various powers of the Liquefactionists, Senders, etc., but who has returned with his diagnosis of the dread force at work through all of them—the Human Virus. His books, then, are an effort to "isolate and treat" that virus.

One more point needs to be made about the relation between Burroughs' experience with drugs and his vision of a decaying and dying universe blighted by the evil virus. Early in the book he says, "Junk is surrounded by magic and taboos, curses and amulets" and he refers to the feeling of yage-taking Indians that "their self-destructive trends" are due to "the manipulation of alien and hostile wills." One can well imagine that to live in the junk world is to feel oneself surrounded by all sorts of invisible powers to whom you are in a state of thralldom and powerless subservience (peddlers), or of whose punitive powers you are afraid (police). And the actual taking of drugs is, in effect, a ceding of your own consciousness and self-control to something more powerful that mysteriously enters you and takes you over. Thus, the experienced addict may well come to share that primitive feeling that he is being manipulated by "alien and hostile wills." And I think Burroughs shares this demonology. His people do not destroy themselves: they are taken over. The evil is external—waiting in the land. The relevance of stressing this will be clearer when we come to *Nova Express,* in which the evil forces come from another planet. Here it is enough to say that Burroughs emerges as an exemplary Factualist with an imagination haunted by a sense of alien demons dedicated to usurpation, dissolution and death.

Burroughs made the point very clearly in a recent interview. First he said, "I don't think anything happens in this universe except by some power—or individual—making it happen. Nothing happens of itself. I believe all events are produced by will." The interviewer then asked if he believed in God. "God? I wouldn't say. I think there are innumerable gods. What we on earth call God is a little tribal god who has made an awful mess. Certainly *forces operating through human consciousness control events*" [Italics are mine]. So we can see Burroughs' work as an attempt to sight and resist those dark demonic forces which operate through human consciousness in order to transform complex life down into a mere mess of matter. Now this has been done before. Pope's *Dunciad,* for instance, shows a world

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dominated by the forces of Dulness which are driving everything downwards to mud, darkness, inertia and sleep. But Pope's poem is an act of resistance as well as a prophecy. For the writing itself is clean, lucid and active: a sign of wakefulness in a dozing world. We are given an ironic tension between the subject matter—a world sinking to madness and death—and the art, which is vitally intelligent throughout. What we must now consider is how Burroughs is pitting his art against the oncoming threat. Which means that we must consider the "cut-up" technique which he developed into a theory after *Naked Lunch*. Is it in fact the best way for a devout Factualist to combat a "sending" world?

The technique is perhaps best described in a letter he wrote to Allen Ginsberg in 1960, shortly after Brion Gysin had introduced him to cut-ups. "Take the enclosed copy of this letter. Cut along the lines. Rearrange putting section one by section three and section two by section four. Now read aloud and you will hear My Voice. Whose voice? Listen. Cut and rearrange in any combination. . . . Dont think about it. Dont theorize. Try it! . . . With any poems any prose." Now this is not exactly new, as Burroughs admits. Tristan Tzara and the Surrealists would create written works by relying on chance, the *trouvaille,* random association and gratuitous juxtaposition–it was a calculated attack on the conscious controlling mind. But Burroughs' motives and intentions seem to be more far-reaching. The letter he sent to Ginsberg to read and then cut up opens with words he used later in *The Soft Machine* and again at the start of *Nova Express*. They are the Factualists' summons to rebellion.

> LISTEN TO MY LAST WORDS ANY WORLD. LISTEN ALL YOU BOARDS SYNDICATES AND GOVERNMENTS OF THE EARTH. AND YOU POWER POWERS BEHIND WHAT FILTH DEALS CONSUMMATED IN WHAT LAVATORY TO TAKE WHAT IS NOT YOURS. TO SELL THE GROUND FROM UNBORN FEET. LISTEN. WHAT I HAVE TO SAY IS FOR ALL MEN EVERYWHERE. I REPEAT FOR ALL. NO ONE IS EXCLUDED. FREE TO ALL WHO PAY. FREE TO ALL WHO PAIN PAY.
>
> WHAT SCARED YOU ALL INTO TIME? WHAT SCARED YOU ALL INTO YOUR BODIES? INTO SHIT FOREVER?

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> DO YOU WANT TO STAY THERE FOREVER? THEN LISTEN TO THE LAST WORDS OF HASSAN SABBAH. LISTEN LOOK OR SHIT FOREVER. LISTEN LOOK OR SHIT FOREVER. WHAT SCARED YOU INTO TIME? INTO BODY? INTO SHIT? I WILL TELL YOU. THE WORD. THE-THEE WORD. IN THEE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD. SCARED YOU ALL INTO SHIT FOREVER. COME OUT FOREVER. COME OUT OF THE TIME WORD FOREVER. COME OUT OF THE BODY WORD THEE FOREVER. COME OUT OF THE SHIT WORD THE FOREVER. ALL OUT OF TIME AND INTO SPACE. FOREVER. THERE IS NO THING TO FEAR. THERE IS NO THING IN SPACE. THAT IS ALL ALL ALL HASSAN SABBAH. IF YOU I CANCEL ALL YOUR WORDS FOREVER. AND THE WORDS OF HASSAN SABBAH I AS ALSO CANCEL. ACROSS ALL YOUR SKIES SEE THE SILENT WRITING OF BRION GYSIN HASSAN SABBAH. THE WRITING OF SPACE. THE WRITING OF SILENCE.

Much of Burroughs' subsequent work can be explained by this letter. He sees the human race as trapped in time and body (or shit—here used emotively to convey his disgust at the foul matter we are immersed in). Fear keeps us cowering in these temporal and physical dimensions; and there are powers at work still taking us over. But what is the ultimate source of our imprisonment? "The Word." Particularly all the words that work on us as bodies living in time. His invitation is—come out of time and the physical world into clean empty space; come out of the world of words into the world of silence. To this end, he intends to use words that cancel words, a language that will destroy language—the writing of silence. Pope's tactic was to use language with ever more sharpness, precision and embattled incisiveness. Burroughs goes all the other way. He writes to make us immune to language altogether. Now before we try to assess the result of this paradoxical position, we should try to understand why Burroughs sees "the word" as the great threat (and thus presumably the most important weapon used by the malign forces working against the human). And why he who projected a nightmare vision of "random events in a dying universe" should now turn to the random use of words as a weapon against death, decay and inertia.

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Let us go back to junk for a moment. Burroughs says that narcotics disturb "normal perception" and "set up instead a random craving for images." A junkie, he tells us, will "read newspapers and magazines right straight through. Indiscriminately. Every word." And he adds: "If drugs weren't forbidden in America, they would be the perfect middle-class vice. Addicts would do their work and come home to consume the huge dose of images awaiting them in the mass media." In this connection Burroughs has increasingly interested himself in films, with the ultimate implication that for a lot of people "reality is actually a movie." But "the word" remains as the most powerful way in which to take over a person's mind with a false reality. In our helpless passivity in the face of manufactured word patterns (of which the junkie's indiscriminate reading is only a particularly extreme example), we readily fall prey to the hostile powers who manipulate us and rob us of our spontaneous individual life and draw us down toward the state of "the all-purpose blob." Coming from someone who once worked in an advertising agency it is an understandable and authentic vision. The question remains: why does Burroughs think that the cut-up method of writing is a major way to combat the dangerous human subservience to "the word"?

Two points emerge from his essay on "The Cut-Up Method." First: "You cannot will spontaneity. But you can introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors." We may recall that the evil forces in *Naked Lunch* worked against spontaneity in individual life. The cut-up method thus becomes a gesture of resistance to external molding; an act of spontaneity in an increasingly manipulated world. Secondly he says that the cut-up method can be applied "to other fields than writing." He alludes to the use of the principle of "random action" in "game and military strategy." Thus: "Assume that the worst has happened and act accordingly. If your strategy is at some point determined . . . by random factors your opponent will gain no advantage from knowing your strategy since he can not predict the move." Perhaps we can suggest how this applies to Burroughs' own cut-ups by suggesting a crude military analogy. If you are in retreat in the face of an advancing army, it is well to impede their progress toward you by blowing up bridges and demolishing roads. Now, if we regard normal linguistic habits as bridges and roads into the human consciousness, we can perhaps see what Burroughs is

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trying to do. He is working to sabotage the main lines of communication which the occupying army will otherwise use. False meanings come trooping down the open roads into our heads. Strategy? Destroy! An interesting observation by Norman Mailer from another context is not out of place here. "As cultures die, they are stricken with the mute implacable rage of that humanity strangled within them. So long as it grows, a civilization depends on the elaboration of meaning, its health is maintained by an awareness of its state; as it dies, a civilization opens itself to the fury of those betrayed by its meaning, precisely because that meaning was finally not sufficiently true to offer a life adequately large. *The aesthetic shifts from the creation of meaning to the destruction of it*" [Italics are mine]. And he says of surrealistic writing in general: "The charge comes more from sound than from meaning. Opposites and irreconcilables are connected to one another like pepper sprinkled on ice cream. Only a palate close to death could extract pleasure from the taste; it is absurd in our mouth, pepper and ice cream, but at least it is new." It remains to be seen whether Burroughs' later work can escape this indictment of surrealist random writing; whether, in fact, it is solely devoted to the "destruction of meaning."

Certainly, from one point of view, in the realm of language Burroughs is acting rather like an underground resistance group in a country occupied by foreign powers. "They" have taken over the language of the world: *he* retaliates by blowing it up. Of course, this way we will also lack our roads and bridges—but at least the enemy cannot use them, and we can survive in an impenetrable territory of our own. "Sabotage" Burroughs certainly has undertaken. He has cut up Conrad's *Lord Jim* (I confess I have not seen the result); he takes bits of Shakespeare, Joyce, Rimbaud, T. S. Eliot, and minces them in with some of his own words. True, Eliot and Pound also used to juxtapose fragments from past literature with their own words, but presumably the effect was calculated. It brought back past imaginations into dynamic proximity with present realities. But in Burroughs these fragments are not clearly juxtaposed: they are scrambled.

To be fair, Burroughs does not regard cut-ups only as a way of destroying language; he also sees them as a way of revivifying and

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refreshing and expanding consciousness. "Cut-ups establish new connections between images, and one's range of vision consequently expands." Expands into what? One might have thought that a careful reading of the original *Lord Jim* might do more for one's consciousness than boggling away at a cut-up of it—but clearly Burroughs has something different in mind. His attack is really on the whole method of constructing meanings, particularly in the Western world. He thinks that the "straight declarative sentence" has been a great error in Western thought; he defines it as "the whole either-or proposition." "Either-or thinking is just not accurate thinking. That's not the way things occur, and I feel the Aristotelian construct is one of the great shackles of Western civilization. Cut-ups are a movement toward breaking this down." Now as a matter of fact all "meanings" work by exclusion: to make a proposition (and even the most primitive language is so structured as to enable its speakers to make propositions) is precisely *not* to capitulate to "the way things occur" but to isolate and identify single factors. Otherwise we can never emerge from what William James called the great "booming chaos which is the child's world." Perhaps we should look at it this way. For Burroughs, cut-ups destroy old constructs of reality, but they also help us to develop a new mode of consciousness, a way of responding which has little to do with the causal unilinear structure of Western thought, but which has more in common with "hieroglyph systems" and "the Chinese ideographs" and, most revealingly, random photographs of street scenes. What Burroughs wants is "blocks of associations" rather than lines of thought (not so new at that, if you think of Pound and Fenellosa). His battle, then, is mainly with the old use of words. "Words, at least the way we use them, can stand in the way of what I call non-body experience. It's time we thought about leaving the body behind." Cut-ups can induce a resistant silence, and then expedite a release into a totally new state of awareness which presumably will make us invulnerable to the hostile forces with their lumbering old-fashioned weapons for invading and subduing the human consciousness.

The ideas are interesting enough, but the question remains: what is the effect of the direct application of his theories, what does the practice reveal? Is the demolition of meaning involved in the cut-up method purposive and positive, or does it smack of the taste of a

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"palate close to death"? On reading some of his cut-up passages, one fallacy strikes me immediately. An Englishman, A. P. Rossiter, once did an experiment involving the presentation of purely nonsensical arrangements of words to children and the study of their reaction. (See "Poetry and Gagagram" in *Our Living Language.*) What was notable was that they all tried to impose or elicit a meaning from the meaningless cluster. In a way bearing out Gestalt theories, they sought for pattern in the conglomeration of isolated units they were confronted with. They were not content with "blocks of association"—they *would* find lines in the mess. And I find that this is the experience in reading Burroughs. One is constantly on the lookout for bits of shipwrecked meaning, searching for glimpses of significant images. One scans the field of words for hints of purposive intent. Old habits die hard, Burroughs might say. But after all we must understand his warning before we can heed it—as he himself implicitly reveals in his splendidly factual and clear-lined statements about his own intentions. How can we grasp the drama unless we can perceive the significance of the opposing forces? And what is it to distinguish between alternatives if not to be indebted to "either-or" modes of thought? Is it the proper business of a committed Factualist to strike at the very roots of our ability to separate out the facts and discriminate among them?

In a way Burroughs concedes the point by interposing bits of narrative between his cut-ups or fold-ins, or whatever. Thus, *The Soft Machine* is, he says, "an expansion of my South American experiences, with surreal extensions." Certain of his old characters pop up from time to time, along with characters due to appear in *Nova Express.* In the book there are many surreal panoramas of vileness, perversion, decay and general foul disorder, which come through blurred because of the violation of syntax, but which nevertheless do come through. But more arresting are the passages which we can read and comprehend in an "old-fashioned" way. For instance, this —about a vague menace called "the guards." "The guards are made from the host; flesh, word and image impression taken in Short Time Booths. Picture the guard as an invisible tapeworm attached to word centers in the brain on color intensity beams. A helpless parasite that dies if the host can find The Word Switch Off." If we know anything about the Burroughs universe we can recognize the

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presence of one of those threatening forces of the Human Virus who work to take over human consciousness. They can be defeated by silence. Well and good. But Burroughs did not make this clear to us through the fragmented impressionism of his cut-up surrealism. Burroughs is once again projecting a vision of a world in danger of being taken over by some unnamed "demonic" agents who are opposed to life in its complex human form. The miasma of surrealism and cut-ups contains, after all, a definite line of allegory. Out of the "language of silence" comes an uttered meaning. Apart from the frivolous distraction of cut-ups, Mr. Burroughs, we are reading you loud and clear!

Finally, a glance at *Nova Express* which contains, as far as I can see, all Burroughs' newest techniques which do not, however, completely obliterate the cosmic drama which has been adumbrated in all his previous work. In many ways the world of the book is like the world of *Naked Lunch* except for the more positive appearance of a force attempting to counter the "virus" which is reducing all spontaneous human life to a meaningless blob. The Nova Mob is made up of various criminals much like the liquefying, devouring, assimilating beasts of his earlier work. But there are also the Nova Police who are moving in on the criminals in order to arrest them. Good enough, one might think. Except that the police themselves, once they are called in to rectify the dangerous situation created by the criminals, are by no means reliable in their activities. Burroughs has made this point very clear: "You've got a bad situation in which the nova mob is about to blow up the planet. So the Heavy Metal Kid calls in the nova police. Once you get them in there, by God, they begin acting like any police. They're always an ambivalent agency. . . . For nova police, read technology, if you wish." Once again, notice, he intends to communicate a definite allegory. This is borne out by the amount of direct statement which occurs in the book. Clearly Burroughs wants to say things which cannot be communicated through cut-ups.

He starts the book with a warning letter from, in effect, himself—Inspector J. Lee, Nova Police. Again a summons to resist the poisonous manipulating powers that are abroad in the world. It contains most of the statements made in the long letter to Ginsberg quoted earlier, with some extensions. For instance: "I call you all.

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Show your cards all players. Pay it all pay it all pay it *all* back." He means us to resist and expose all the lies the human mind is being subjected to by the hostile powers and all the "collaborators with Insect People with Vegetable People." Addiction—every kind—is again the method of the enemy, who promise that these various forms of addiction lead to "The Garden of Delights": but, says Inspector Lee, "their Garden of Delights is a terminal sewer—I have been at some pains to map this area of terminal sewage in the so-called pornographic sections of *Naked Lunch* and *Soft Machine*. . . . Stay out of the Garden of Delights—It is a man-eating trap that ends in green goo." The message could not be more clearly stated. *"Peoples of the earth, you have all been poisoned.* Convert all available stocks of morphine to apomorphine. . . . Apomorphine is the only agent that can disintoxicate you can cut the enemy beam off your line. Apomorphine and silence. . . . The purpose of my writing is to expose and arrest Nova Criminals. In *Naked Lunch, Soft Machine* and *Nova Express,* I show who they are and what they will do if they are not arrested. Minutes to go. Souls rotten from their orgasm drugs, flesh shuddering from their nova ovens, prisoners of the earth to *come out.* With your help we can occupy the Reality Studio and retake their universe of Fear Death and Monopoly." He offers us no delights as a reward, only "total austerity and total resistance." It is the voice of a man who has kicked a fatal addiction and now urges a general move toward cure. At one point he says the criminals and police are invisible, but he identifies one of the major criminals as morphine, and the police as apomorphine. The cosmic drama is an extended allegory based on drugs that cause addiction and drugs that cure it. This is important. It means that both the threat and the salvation are external. There is bad control but also good control. Black magic can be countered by white magic. I would call this demonology–even if it is a demonology based on some pretty extensive study of recent developments in science.

One of the difficulties is that some very recognizable satire on social ailments merges into a sort of interplanetary melodrama. For instance, the activities of the "subliminal kid" will come as no surprise to anyone who has read books like *The Hidden Persuaders.* And when Burroughs issues a demand to the "Boards Syndicates Governments of the earth" to "Pay back the *Color* you stole" we can recog-

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nize a fairly traditional sort of esthetic, even romantic, outcry against the distortion and exploitation of nature practised by the forces of an industrial society. (For instance: "*Pay Red*—Pay back the red you stole for your lying flags and your Coca-Cola signs—Pay that red back to penis and blood and sun—*Pay Blue*—Pay back the blue you stole and bottled and doled out in eye droppers of junk—Pay back the blue you stole for your police uniforms—Pay that blue back to sea and sky and eyes of the earth" and so on.) But it is not clear how these specific attacks on recognizable ills relate to such enigmatic phenomena as "The Oxygen Impasses." He explains: "Life Form A arrives on alien planet from a crippled space craft—Life Form A breathes 'oxygen'—There is no 'oxygen' in the atmosphere of alien planet but by invading and occupying Life Form B native to alien planet they can convert the 'oxygen' they need from the blood stream of Life Form B. . . . Health and interest of the host is disregarded." And so on. Burroughs' use of scientific and biological phenomena to dramatize a general drama of unscrupulous parasites and hapless hosts in the human realm is very interesting—but the terms of the application of these images are not clear. Is there *literally* an alien force from another planet taking us over? If it is intended *metaphorically,* then to what actual forces on earth do these images refer? This is always the danger of an analogy—that as well as illuminating a process or phenomenon in another realm, it may also simplify or even falsify it. The malicious appropriation and exploitation of other people's vitality and individuality is a major theme in American literature—in the work of Hawthorne and Henry James, to go no further afield. From this point of view we can see that Burroughs' idea of a virus eating out the independent life of a human host is a further exploration, in peculiarly modern terms, of an old theme. The question is, with his vivid and powerful imagery has he in fact deepened our comprehension of this theme?

The images are certainly as telling as ever in this book: the metal junkies, the scorpion men, the fish people, the prisoners being broken down into insect forms, the monster crab, the tanks in which "whole peoples" are melted down "into one concentrate." The Controllers, the Lemurs, the Mongolian Archers "with black metal flesh," as well as all the comic yet ominous characters who dart around in the book —all these do help to convey Burroughs' vision of a world nearly taken

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over already. The Nova Police do not bring any discernible order to the world of the book—and indeed one cannot help half suspecting that Burroughs enjoys the chaos he evokes. He would not be the first artist to unconsciously indulge a dangerous taste while ostensibly setting out to warn against it. However, there is one late section called "One More Chance?" which seems to indicate that although we can be controlled by various alien instructions being fed into us on a tape, it is somehow possible to "wipe" the tape clean, until "the person becomes what they call a *clear* sir": it also seems possible to "laugh" the tape clean, which might explain the intention behind some of Burroughs' own black humor (occasionally very funny—occasionally amazingly puerile).

On one level one can see the book as an attempt to show people how their consciousnesses and lives are manipulated and taken over in the modern world. It urges—as other voices have urged in American literature—that people should break out of the false pseudo-realities in which they are imprisoned and emerge into true reality. To this end one can appreciate his strategy of silence, a state of cultivated immunity to the "word and image" onslaughts of the world. But beyond this, how does Burroughs expect us to take his prescriptions? Does he really mean that the only final hope for survival is to escape out of body and time altogether? After all, the ascent into a timeless empty Space which is his dream has something in common with the descent into the inertia and stasis of mere mud and metal which is his nightmare. They are both ways of fleeing from the mixed complexities of sheer life—that spontaneous, free-moving individual life which Burroughs at times is so keen to protect and warn. Again, when he says, "Mankind will have to undergo biologic alterations ultimately, if we are to survive at all. This will require biologic law to decide what changes to make. We will simply have to use our intelligence to plan mutations, rather than letting them occur at random," isn't he advocating a kind of deliberate manipulation of the individual not intrinsically different from the horrors he has shown us? Whose intelligence is to plan the mutation? Can we be sure it will be any better than *Brave New World* if not as terrifying as *1984*? What was it he once said about control only ever leading to more control? And what happens to spontaneity if all randomness is eliminated? It is worth stressing the point, not only because Burroughs is an

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intelligent writer who should be taken seriously; but also because it spotlights a basic problem in his work. Are the forces of evil and good somehow external to man in their origins? Do we need a superhuman doctor to ward off the threat of the superhuman virus? If so, what is the status of the merely human—is he simply the patient on the table hoping that technology can save him before cancer devours him: is he simply the pawn of embattled demons, some benevolent, some malign? There is something distinctly medieval or primitive in this view; and, indeed, Burroughs' work does have more than a trace of the old morality play (interestingly enough his next book is to be a Western—which is, after all, the modern equivalent of the morality play). Certainly, the morality play was often a very graphic medium for showing the bemused state of man, his vulnerability and plight; but it was the later dramatists who placed the contending forces deep inside the human individual, who gave us the more penetrating insights into the problems and mysteries of conscious life. Iago is more profound (and more chilling) than the old Devil in the morality plays from whom he descends; Macbeth is a more complex and revealing figure than either as we watch him trying to suppress or outrun the good "natural" impulses that arise to confuse a mind trying to eliminate conscience and self-knowledge altogether. To put it another way, Burroughs' depiction of The Buyer is genuinely horrifying as the embodiment of a diabolical force which assimilates other people; yet Roger Chillingworth or Gilbert Osmond are more subtle studies of the human impulse to thwart and abuse the spontaneous life of others. It is ultimately harder to write about people than demons. It's easier to talk of a virus from another planet than to grapple with dark impulses welling up from the depth of the individual self.

An interesting afterthought is provided by Burroughs' definition of the sort of work he now wants to write. "What I want to do is to learn to see more of what's out there, to look outside, to achieve as far as possible a complete awareness of surroundings. Beckett wants to go inward. First he was in a bottle and now he is in the mud. I am aimed in the other direction—outward." He goes on to describe his new, somewhat cumbersome techniques: writing in three columns (what he is doing-thinking-reading), amassing immense amounts of local data and taking hundreds of random photographs of places, and

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so on. At first sight this all seems like a curious regression. The portrayer of demons and nightmares turning to a sort of passive inclusiveness of attention. Indeed, some of these statements sound rather like Sherwood Anderson, even Whitman: they suggest the deliberate adoption of an attitude of unselective wonder, the use of the all-including "naïve" eye which has for long attracted American writers as an important way of reestablishing a pristine contact with reality. "Why are people bored? Because they can't see what is right under their eyes right in their own back yard. And why can't they see what is right under their eyes?—(Between the eye and the object falls the shadow)—And that shadow, B. J., is the pre-recorded word." (*St. Louis Return*). The idea that other peoples' words (which includes other literatures) can serve as a shadow, coming between the eye and the world and preventing any original contact between the seeing self and reality, is one which is deeply ingrained in American thought. From one point of view, it is pure Emerson. It seems a remarkable coincidence that at the moment when Burroughs is making a literal return to America (to his birthplace, St. Louis), his writing should turn to an attitude and aspiration so basic to American literature—the desire to establish an original visual relationship with things, to discover for oneself the "new world." Notice the contrast he draws between himself and Beckett. Beckett, the European, is going inward and downward (to the mud), which may or may not be true of Beckett, but is true enough of what happened to Burroughs in his years of addiction in foreign places. This new desire to go outward, to rediscover the whole teeming plenitude around him, seems to me like a continuation of his escape from that small death room in Tangier. It remains to be seen whether, in his quest for "complete awareness of surroundings," Burroughs will simply assemble more and more data, more photographs, more scrap books, more heaps of unrelated memories and sense impressions; or whether he will discern the lineaments of hidden dramas.

Hofmannsthal once noted: "Each epoch has its own sentimentality, its specific way of over-emphasizing strata of emotion." It is as possible to sentimentalize one's sense of evil as it is any other emotion—by overemphasizing it and inflating it to the exclusion of subtler considerations. Thus the Gothic novel can often be sentimental inasmuch as it deals in vague horrors rather than specific threats. It is one

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thing to show people with evil motives at their work (as in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses,* for instance); it seems to me both easier and more sentimental to posit an external nonhuman power of evil which strikes from without. The temptation is to call this externalization and melodramatization of the contest between evil and good evasive. It can be misleading to talk of cosmic cops and robbers, viruses and plagues, demons and witches. For in striving to bring the threat home to us, it actually serves in some ways to remove it. It gives the impression that the problem of evil is referable to outer forces—demons and diseases operating in a world of nightmare—and not a problem specific to the human realm. After all, there is no Nova Mob, but only real people moving in a real world. As Norman Mailer said, "The shits are killing us"—but who are the shits if not us?

Undoubtedly the feeling of unnameable, unanalyzable malign pressures moving in on the individual is a very real one in America, and to that extent American writers like Burroughs are giving utterance to a nightmare vision which is very real. What it might be interesting to consider is why so many writers in America are drawn to this sort of allegorizing or schematizing response to experience. If we can broadly say that the instinct to compose myths of one sort or another is an attempt to comprehend and articulate some strange unfathomed reality which the mind has not yet learned to subdue or clarify in any other way, then we might speculate that one of the major ways for the American imagination to project its experience of American reality is to mythologize or allegorize it, from Hawthorne's time to Burroughs'. European writers, perhaps, have been more sure of the nature of the realities they have had to cope with; the factors at work in society (whether for good or bad) tend to be known factors; the sources of dissolution, malappropriation or whatever, can more often be located and recognized. In America it is possible that the pressures are too great (see for instance the world of Saul Bellow's novels), the encompassing realities are too confused, too massed and mobile, to permit of any calm analysis or stable identification of what was behind this threat or that exploitation, or to trace to its source the general feeling of being intolerably harassed, manipulated and pushed about or suffocated. Perhaps—this is my last speculation—this mythologizing, or, better, this *demonizing* of reality, is the way many American writers feel they can best project

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their experience of the impact of agencies they cannot confidently define. Burroughs' "silence" may then have another aspect—not only an act of defense and self-preservation, but also a recognition of mystery. In Wittgenstein's words: "What one cannot speak about one must pass over in silence." But surely the greatest writers have always striven to find the exact, the necessary words: not the words that imprison, but the words that liberate.

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FOR THEODORE ROETHKE
1908-1963

All night you wallowed through my sleep,
then in the morning you were lost
in the Maine sky—close, cold and gray,
smoke and smoke-colored cloud.

Sheeplike, unsociable reptilian, two
hell-divers splattered squawking on the water,
loons devolving to a monochrome.
You honored nature,

helpless, elemental creature.
The black stump of your hand
just touched the waters under the earth,
and left them quickened with your name. . . .

Now, you honor the mother.
Omnipresent,
she made you non-existent,
the ocean's anchor, our high tide.

Robert Lowell

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William Styron

RUNAWAY

Like mine, Hark's misfortune had been that he was only a single item among a man's total capital, and this was instantly and easily disposable when the economy foundered. A Negro as fantastic as Hark could always command a lovely price. Like me, he too had been born and reared on a large plantation—his in Sussex county which borders on Southampton to the north. This plantation had been liquidated along about the same year as Turner's Mill and Hark had been bought by Joseph Travis, who at that time had not developed his wheelmaking craft but was still engaged in farming. Hark's former owners, people or monsters named Barnett, proposed to develop a new plantation down in a section of Mississippi where field labor was at that moment abundant and female house labor scarce. And so they took Hark's mother and his two sisters with them and left Hark behind, the money gained from his sale financing the rather difficult and expensive overland trip to the Delta. Poor Hark. He was devoted to his mother and his sisters—indeed he had never spent a day in his life apart from them. Thus began what was to become one of a series of bereavements; seven or eight years later he was separated forever by Travis from his wife and little son.

Hark was never (at least until I was able to bend him to my will) an obstreperous or intractable Negro, and for much of the time I knew him I lamented the fact that as with most young slaves brought up as field hands—ignorant, demoralized, cowed by overseers and black drivers, occasionally whipped—the plantation system had leached out of his great and noble body so much native courage, so much spirit and dignity, that he was left as humble as a spaniel in the face of the white man's presence and authority. Nonetheless,

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he contained deep within him the smoldering fire of independence; certainly through my exhortations I was later able to fan it into a terrible blaze. Certainly, too, that fire must have been burning when shortly after his sale to Travis—stunned, confused, heartsick, with no God to turn to—he decided to run away.

Hark once told me how it all happened. At the Barnett plantation, where life for the field Negroes had been harsh, the matter of running away was of continual interest and concern. All of this was talk, however, since even the stupidest and most foolhardy slave was likely to be intimidated by the prospect of stumbling across the hundreds of miles of wilderness which lay to the north, and knew also that even to attain the free states was no guarantee of refuge: many a Negro had been hustled back into slavery by covetous sharp-eyed Northern white men. It was all rather hopeless but some had tried and some had almost succeeded. One of the Barnett Negroes, a clever, older man named Hannibal, had vowed after a severe beating by the overseer to take no more. He "lit out" one spring night and after a month found himself not far from Washington, in the outskirts of the town of Alexandria, where he was taken prisoner by a suspicious citizen with a fowling piece who eventually returned Hannibal to the plantation and, presumably, collected the two hundred dollar reward. It was Hannibal (now a sort of hero to many of the slaves though to others a madman) whose advice Hark remembered when he himself became a runaway. Move in the night, sleep by day, follow the North Star, avoid main-traveled roads, avoid dogs. Hannibal's destination had been the Susquehanna river in Maryland. A Quaker missionary, a wandering, queer, distraught, wild-eyed white man (soon chased off the plantation), had managed to impart this much information to Hannibal's group of berry-pickers: after Baltimore follow close by the highway to the north, and at the Susquehanna crossing ask for the Quaker meeting house, where someone was stationed night and day to convey runaways a few miles upriver to Pennsylvania and freedom. This intelligence Hark memorized with care, particularly the all-important name of the river—rather a trick for a field hand's tongue–repeating it over and over in Hannibal's presence until he had it properly, just as he had been told: *Squash-honna, Squash-honna, Squash-honna.*

Hark had no way of knowing that Travis was at heart a more

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lenient master than Barnett had been. He understood only that he had been separated from all the family he had ever had and from the only home he had ever known. After a week at Travis's his misery and homesickness and his general sense of loss became insupportable. And so one summer night he decided to light out, heading for that Quaker church two hundred miles away in Maryland which Hannibal had told him about many months before. At first it was all very much a kind of lark, for stealing away from Travis was a simple matter. He had only to tiptoe out of the shed in which he was kept after Travis had gone to sleep, and with a flour sack containing some bacon and corn meal, a jackknife, and flint for starting fires, all stolen, the entire parcel slung over his shoulder on a stick, make his way into the woods. It was easy as it could be. The woods were quiet. There he paused for an hour or so, waiting to see if by any chance Travis might discover his absence and raise an alarm, but no sound came from the house. He crept out along the edge of the trees, took to the road north and sauntered along in high spirits beneath a golden moon. The weather was balmy, he made excellent time, and the only eventful moment of that first night came when a dog ran out from a farmhouse, furiously barking, and snapped at his heels. This proved Hannibal correct in his advice about dogs, and caused Hark to resolve that in the future he would give all dwellings wide berth, even if it meant losing hours by moving to the woods. He met no one on the road and as the agreeable night passed he began to feel a tingling sense of jubilation: running away seemed to be no great undertaking after all. When dawn came he knew he had made good progress—though how far he had traveled he could not tell, lacking any notion of the size of a mile—and with the sound of roosters crowing in some distant barnyard he fell asleep on the ground in a stand of beech trees, well away from the road.

Just before noon he was aroused by the sound of dogs barking to the south, a quavering chorus of yelps and frantic howls which made him sit up in terror. Surely they were after him! His first impulse was to climb a tree but he quickly lost heart for this endeavor because of his terror of heights. Instead he crept into a blackberry thicket and peeked out at the road. Two slobbering bloodhounds followed by four men on horseback came out of the distance in a cloud of dust, the men's faces each set in a blue-eyed, grim, avenging look

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of outrage that made Hark certain that he was the object of their pursuit; he shivered in fright and hid his head amid the blackberries but to his amazement and relief the baying and yelping diminished up the road, along with the fading clatter of hooves. After a bit all was still. Hark crouched in the blackberry patch until late afternoon. When dusk began to fall he built a fire, cooking over it a little bacon and some hoecake he made with water from a stream, and upon the onset of darkness resumed his journey north.

His difficulties about finding the way began that night and plagued him all the long hours of his flight into freedom. By notches cut with his knife on a small stick each morning, he later calculated (or it was calculated for him by someone who could count) the trip as having lasted six weeks. Hannibal had counseled two guides for the trip: the North Star, and the great plank and log turnpike leading up through Petersburg, Richmond, Washington and Baltimore. The names of these towns Hark too had memorized approximately and in sequence, since Hannibal had pointed out that each place would serve as a milestone of one's progress; also, in the event that one got lost, such names would be useful in asking directions from some trustworthy-looking Negro along the route. By remaining close to the turnpike—although taking care to stay out of sight—one could use the road as a kind of unvarying arrow pointing north and regard each successive town as a marker of one's forward course on the journey toward the free states. The trouble with this scheme, as Hark quickly discovered, was that it made no provision for the numberless side routes and forks that branched off the turnpike and which could lead a confused stranger into all manner of weird directions, especially on a dark night. The North Star was supposed to compensate for this and Hark found it valuable, but on overcast evenings or in those patches of fog which were so frequent along swampy ground this celestial beacon was of no more use to him than the crudely painted direction signs he was unable to read. So the darkness enfolded him in its embrace and he lost the road as a guide. That second night, as for so many succeeding nights, he made no progress at all but was forced to stay in the woods until the dawn, when he began to cautiously reconnoiter and found the route—a log road in daytime busy with passing farm wagons and carts and humming with danger.

Hark had many adventures along the way. His bacon and corn-

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meal ran out quickly but of all his problems food was the least pressing. A runaway was forced to live off the land, and Hark, like most plantation Negroes, was a resourceful thief. Only rarely was he out of sight of some habitation or other and these places yielded up an abundance of fruit and vegetables, ducks, geese, chickens—once even a pig. Two or three times, skirting a farm or plantation, he imposed upon the hospitality of friendly Negroes, whom he would hail at twilight from the trees and who would spirit him a piece of bacon or some boiled collard greens or a pan full of grits. But his great hulking prowling form made him conspicuous. He was rightly fearful of making his presence known to anyone, black or white, and so he soon began keeping strictly to himself. He even gave up requests for simple directions of the Negroes: they seemed to grow more ignorant as he progressed north and filled his ears with such an incoherent rigamarole of disaways and dataways that he turned from them in perplexity and disgust.

Hark's spirit took wing when at sunrise, a week or so after leaving Travis's, he found himself in the wooded outskirts of what, according to Hannibal's schedule, would be Petersburg. Having never seen a town of *any* size or description, he was flabbergasted by the number of stores and houses and the commotion and colorful stir of people, wagons, and carriages in the streets. To pass around the town without being seen was something of a problem but he managed it that night, after sleeping most of the day in a nearby pine grove. He had to swim a small river in the early darkness, paddling with one hand and holding up his clothes and his sack in the other. But he moved without detection in a half-circle about the town and pushed on north somewhat regretfully, since he had been able to pluck from some back porch a gallon of buttermilk in a wooden cask and several excellent peach pies. That night in a wild rainstorm he got hopelessly lost and to his dismay discovered when dawn came that he had been walking due east, to God knows where. It was bleak, barren pine country, almost unpopulated, filled with lonely prospects of eroded red earth. The log road, fallen into sawdust, petered out and led nowhere. The next night Hark retraced his steps and soon had negotiated the short leg of his journey to Richmond—like Petersburg a lively community with a cedarwood bridge leading to it over a river and abustle with

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more black and white people than he had ever imagined existed. Indeed, from his pinewoods view down on the town he saw so many Negroes moving in and out and across the bridge—some of these doubtless free, others on passes from nearby farms—that he was almost emboldened to mingle among them and see the city, taking a chance that he might not be challenged by a suspicious white man. Prudence won out, however, and he slept through the day. He swam across the river after nightfall and stole past the dark shuttered houses as he had at Petersburg, leaving Richmond like that other town poorer by a pie or two.

And so he made his way on north through the dark nights, sometimes losing the road so completely that he was forced to backtrack for several days until he regained the route. His shoes wore out and collapsed and for two nights he walked close to the road on bare feet. Finally one morning he entered the open door of a farmhouse while its people were in the fields and made off with a pair of patent leather boots so tight that he had to cut holes for the toes. Thus shod, he pushed through the gloomy woods toward Washington. It must have been August by now and the chiggers and sweat flies and the mosquitoes were out in full swarm. Some days on Hark's pine needle bed were almost impossible for sleep. Thunderstorms rumbling out of the west drenched him and froze him and scared him half out of his wits. He lost sight of the North Star more times than he could count. Forks and turnings confused him. Moonless nights caused him to stay away from the road and lose himself in a bog or thicket where owls hooted mournfully and the water moccasins thrashed drowsily in brackish pools. On such nights Hark's misery and loneliness seemed more than he could bear. Twice he came close to being caught, the first occasion somewhere just south of Washington when, traversing the edge of a cornfield just before nightfall, he nearly stepped on a white man who happened at that moment to be defecating in the bushes. Hark ran, the man pulled up his pants, yelled and gave chase, but Hark quickly outstripped him. That night, though, he heard dogs baying as if in pursuit and for one time in his life fought down his fear of high places and spent hours perched on the limb of a big maple tree while the dogs bayed and moaned in the distance. His other close call came between what must have been Washington and Baltimore when he

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was shocked out of his sleep underneath a hedge to find himself in the midst of a fox hunt. The great bodies of horses hurtled over him as if in some nightmare, and their hooves spattered his face with wet stinging little buttons of earth. Crouching on his elbows and knees to protect himself, Hark thought the end had come when a red-jacketed horseman reined in his mount and asked curtly what a strange nigger was doing in such a dumb position—obtaining in reply the statement that the nigger was praying—and believed it a miracle when the man said nothing but merely galloped off in the morning mists.

He had been told that Maryland was a slave state, but one morning when he happened upon a town which could only have been Baltimore he decided to risk exposure by creeping out of the edge of the hayfield in which he had been hiding and calling, in a furtive voice, to a Negro man strolling toward the city along the log road. "*Squash-honna,*" Hark said. "Whichaway to de Squash-honna?" But the Negro, a yellow loose-limbed field hand, only gazed back at Hark as if he were crazy and continued up the road with quickening pace. Undaunted, Hark resumed the journey with growing confidence that soon it would all be over. Perhaps there were five more nights of walking when at last, early one morning, Hark was aware that he was no longer in the woods. Here in the gathering light the trees gave way to a grassy plain which seemed to slope down, ever so gently, toward a stand of cattails and marsh grass rustling in the morning breeze. The wind tasted of salt, exciting Hark and making him press forward eagerly across the savannah-like plain. He strode boldly through the marsh, ankle-deep in water and mud, and finally with pounding heart attained a glistening beach unbelievably pure and clean and thick with sand. Beyond lay the river, so wide here that Hark could barely see across it, a majestic expanse of blue water flecked with whitecaps blown up by a southerly wind. For long minutes Hark stood there marveling at the sight, watching the waves lapping at the driftwood on the shore. Fishnets hung from stakes in the water, and far out a boat with white sails bellying moved serenely toward the north—the first boat Hark had ever seen. In his patent leather boots, now split beyond recognition, he walked up the beach a short distance and presently he spied a skinny little Negro man sitting on the edge of a little rowboat drawn up against the shore. This close to freedom Hark

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decided that he could at last hazard a direct inquiry and so he approached the Negro confidently.

"Say, man," said Hark, remembering the question he was supposed to ask, "whar de Quakah meetin' house?"

The Negro looked at him through oval spectacles on wire rims, the only pair of glasses Hark had ever seen on a Negro. He had a friendly little monkey's face with smallpox scars all over it and a crown of grizzled hair shining with pig grease. He said nothing for quite some time, then he declared: "You is some big nigger boy. How old is you, sonny?"

"I'se nineteen," Hark replied.

"You bond or free?"

"I'se bond," said Hark. "I done run off. Whar de Quakah meetin' house?"

The Negro's eyes remained twinkling and amiable behind his spectacles. Then he said again: "You is some *big* nigger boy. What yo' name, sonny?"

"I'se called Hark. Was Hark Barnett. Now Hark Travis."

"Well, Hark," the man said, rising from his perch on the rowboat, "you jes' wait right here and I'll go see about dat meetin' house. You jes' set right here," he went on, placing a brotherly hand on Hark's arm and urging him down to a seat on the edge of the rowboat. "You has had *some* kind of time but now it's all over with," he said in a kindly voice. "You jes' set right there while I go see about dat meetin' house. You jes' set right there and rest yo' self and we'll take care of dat meetin' house." Then he hustled up the beach and disappeared behind a copse of small stunted trees.

Gratified and relieved to be at last so close to the end of his quest, Hark sat there on the rowboat for a long moment, contemplating the blue windy sweep of the river, more grand and awesome than anything he had ever seen in his life. Soon a lazy, pleasant drowsiness overtook him, and his eyelids became heavy, and he stretched out on the sand in the warm sun and went to sleep.

Then he heard a sudden voice and he awoke in terror to see a white man standing over him with a musket, hammer cocked, ready to shoot.

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"One move and I'll blow your head off," said the white man. "Tie him up, Samson."

It was not so much that Samson, one of his own kind—the little Negro with the glasses—had betrayed him which grieved Hark in later times, although that was bad enough. It was that he had really journeyed to the ends of the earth to get nowhere. For within three days he was back with Travis (who had liberally stickered the countryside with posters); he had walked those six weeks in circles, in zigzags, in looping spirals, never once traveling more than forty miles from home. The simple truth of the matter is that Hark, born and raised in the plantation's abyssal and aching night, had no more comprehension of the vastness of the world than a baby in a cradle. There was no way for him to know about cities, he had never seen a hamlet; and thus he may be excused for not perceiving that "Richmond" and "Washington" and "Baltimore" were in truth any of a dozen nondescript little villages of the Tidewater—Jerusalem, Drewrysville, Smithfield—and that the noble watercourse upon whose shore he stood with such trust and hope and joy was not "the Squashhonna" but that ancient mother-river of slavery, the James.

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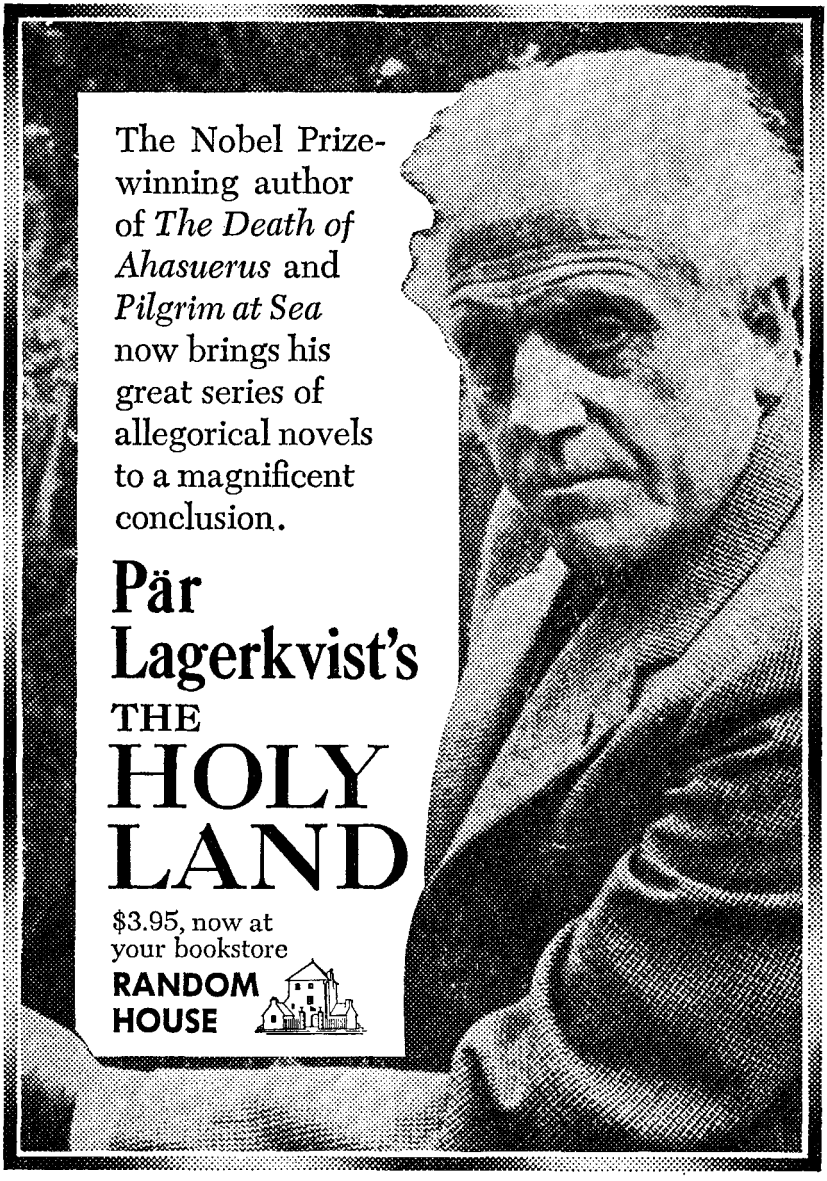
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Claude Lévi-Strauss

THE CULINARY TRIANGLE

Linguistics has familiarized us with concepts like "minimum vocalism" and "minimum consonantism" which refer to systems of oppositions between phonemes of so elementary a nature that every known or unknown language supposes them; they are in fact also the first oppositions to appear in the child's language, and the last to disappear in the speech of people affected by certain forms of aphasia.

The two concepts are moreover not really distinct, since, according to linguists, for every language the fundamental opposition is that between consonant and vowel. The subsequent distinctions among vowels and among consonants result from the application to these derived areas of such contrasts as compact and diffuse, open and closed, acute and grave.

Hence, in all the languages of the world, complex systems of oppositions among phonemes do nothing but elaborate in multiple directions a simpler system common to them all: the contrast between consonant and vowel which, by the workings of a double opposition between compact and diffuse, acute and grave, produces on the one hand what has been called the "vowel triangle":[1]

a
u i

and on the other hand the "consonant triangle":

k
p t

1. On these concepts, see Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale.* Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1963.

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It would seem that the methodological principle which inspires such distinctions is transposable to other domains, notably that of cooking which, it has never been sufficiently emphasized, is with language a truly universal form of human activity: if there is no society without a language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food.

We will start from the hypothesis that this activity supposes a system which is located—according to very different modalities in function of the particular cultures one wants to consider—within a triangular semantic field whose three points correspond respectively to the categories of the raw, the cooked and the rotted. It is clear that in respect to cooking the raw constitutes the unmarked pole, while the other two poles are strongly marked, but in different directions: indeed, the cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation. Underlying our original triangle, there is hence a double opposition between *elaborated/unelaborated* on the one hand, and *culture/nature* on the other.

No doubt these notions constitute empty forms: they teach us nothing about the cooking of any specific society, since only observation can tell us what each one means by "raw," "cooked" and "rotted," and we can suppose that it will not be the same for all. Italian cuisine has recently taught us to eat *crudités* rawer than any in traditional French cooking, thereby determining an enlargement of the category of the raw. And we know from some incidents that followed the Allied landings in 1944 that American soldiers conceived the category of the rotted in more extended fashion than we, since the odor given off by Norman cheese dairies seemed to them the smell of corpses, and occasionally prompted them to destroy the dairies.

Consequently, the culinary triangle delimits a semantic field, but from the outside. This is moreover true of the linguistic triangles as well, since there are no phonemes *a, i, u* (or *k, p, t*) in general, and these ideal positions must be occupied, in each language, by the particular phonemes whose distinctive natures are closest to those for which we first gave a symbolic representation: thus we have a sort of concrete triangle inscribed within the abstract triangle. In any cuisine, nothing is simply cooked, but must be cooked in one fashion or another. Nor is there any condition of pure rawness: only certain foods can really be eaten raw, and then only if they have been selected, washed, pared or cut, or even seasoned. Rotting, too, is only allowed to take place in certain specific ways, either spontaneous or controlled.

Let us now consider, for those cuisines whose categories are relatively well-known, the different modes of cooking. There are certainly two

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principal modes, attested in innumerable societies by myths and rites which emphasize their contrast: the roasted and the boiled. In what does their difference consist? Roasted food is directly exposed to the fire; with the fire it realizes an *unmediated conjunction,* whereas boiled food is doubly mediated, by the water in which it is immersed, and by the receptacle that holds both water and food.

On two grounds, then, one can say that the roasted is on the side of nature, the boiled on the side of culture: literally, because boiling requires the use of a receptacle, a cultural object; symbolically, in as much as culture is a mediation of the relations between man and the world, and boiling demands a mediation (by water) of the relation between food and fire which is absent in roasting.

The natives of New Caledonia feel this contrast with particular vividness: "Formerly," relates M. J. Barrau, "they only grilled and roasted, they only 'burned' as the natives now say. . . . The use of a pot and the consumption of boiled tubers are looked upon with pride . . . as a proof of . . . civilization."

A text of Aristotle, cited by Salomon Reinach (*Cultes, Mythes, Religions,* V, p. 63), indicates that the Greeks also thought that "in ancient times, men roasted everything."

Behind the opposition between roasted and boiled, then, we do in fact find, as we postulated at the outset, the opposition between nature and culture. It remains to discover the other fundamental opposition which we put forth: that between elaborated and unelaborated.

In this respect, observation establishes a double affinity: the roasted with the raw, that is to say the unelaborated, and the boiled with the rotted, which is one of the two modes of the elaborated. The affinity of the roasted with the raw comes from the fact that it is never uniformly cooked, whether this be on all sides, or on the outside and the inside. A myth of the Wyandot Indians well evokes what might be called the paradox of the roasted: the Creator struck fire, and ordered the first man to skewer a piece of meat on a stick and roast it. But man was so ignorant that he left the meat on the fire until it was black on one side, and still raw on the other. . . . Similarly, the Pocomchi of Mexico interpret the roasted as a compromise between the raw and the burned. After the universal fire, they relate, that which had not been burned became white, that which had been burned turned black, and what had only been singed turned red. This explanation accounts for the various colors of corn and beans. In British Guiana, the Waiwai sorcerer must respect two taboos, one directed at roast meat, the other red paint, and this again puts the roasted on the side of blood and the raw.

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If boiling is superior to roasting, notes Aristotle, it is because it takes away the rawness of meat, "roast meats being rawer and drier than boiled meats" (quoted by Reinach, *loc. cit.*).

As for the boiled, its affinity with the rotted is attested in numerous European languages by such locutions as *pot pourri, olla podrida,* denoting different sorts of meat seasoned and cooked together with vegetables; and in German, *zu Brei zerkochetes Fleisch,* "meat rotted from cooking." American Indian languages emphasize the same affinity, and it is significant that this should be so especially in those tribes that show a strong taste for gamy meat, to the point of preferring, for example, the flesh of a dead animal whose carcass has been washed down by the stream to that of a freshly-killed buffalo. In the Dakota language, the same stem connotes putrefaction and the fact of boiling pieces of meat together with some additive.

These distinctions are far from exhausting the richness and complexity of the contrast between roasted and boiled. The boiled is cooked within a receptacle, while the roasted is cooked from without: the former thus evokes the concave, the latter the convex. Also the boiled can most often be ascribed to what might be called an "endo-cuisine," prepared for domestic use, destined to a small closed group, while the roasted belongs to "exo-cuisine," that which one offers to guests. Formerly in France, boiled chicken was for the family meal, while roasted meat was for the banquet (and marked its culminating point, served as it was after the boiled meats and vegetables of the first course, and accompanied by "extraordinary fruits" such as melons, oranges, olives and capers).

The same opposition is found, differently formulated, in exotic societies. The extremely primitive Guayaki of Paraguay roast all their game, except when they prepare the meat destined for the rites which determine the name of a new child: this meat must be boiled. The Caingang of Brazil prohibit boiled meat for the widow and widower, and also for anyone who has murdered an enemy. In all these cases, prescription of the boiled accompanies a tightening, prescription of the roasted a loosening of familial or social ties.

Following this line of argument, one could infer that cannibalism (which by definition is an endo-cuisine in respect to the human race) ordinarily employs boiling rather than roasting, and that the cases where bodies are roasted—cases vouched for by ethnographic literature—must be more frequent in exo-cannibalism (eating the body of an enemy) than in endo-cannibalism (eating a relative). It would be interesting to carry out statistical research on this point.

Sometimes, too, as is often the case in America, and doubtless elsewhere, the roasted and the boiled will have respective affinities with life

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in the bush (outside the village community) and sedentary life (inside the village). From this comes a subsidiary association of the roasted with men, the boiled with women. This is notably the case with the Trumai, the Yagua and the Jivaro of South America, and with the Ingalik of Alaska. Or else the relation is reversed: the Assiniboin, on the northern plains of North America, reserve the preparation of boiled food for men engaged in a war expedition, while the women in the villages never use receptacles, and only roast their meat. There are some indications that in certain Eastern European countries one can find the same inversion of affinities between roasted and boiled and feminine and masculine.

The existence of these inverted systems naturally poses a problem, and leads one to think that the axes of opposition are still more numerous than one suspected, and that the peoples where these inversions exist refer to axes different from those we at first singled out. For example, boiling conserves entirely the meat and its juices, whereas roasting is accompanied by destruction and loss. One connotes economy, the other prodigality; the former is plebeian, the latter aristocratic. This aspect takes on primary importance in societies which prescribe differences of status among individuals or groups. In the ancient Maori, says Prytz-Johansen, a noble could himself roast his food, but he avoided all contact with the steaming oven, which was left to the slaves and women of low birth. Thus, when pots and pans were introduced by the whites, they seemed infected utensils: a striking inversion of the attitude which we remarked in the New Caledonians.

These differences in appraisal of the boiled and the roasted, dependent on the democratic or aristocratic perspective of the group, can also be found in the Western tradition. The democratic *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and d'Alembert goes in for a veritable apology of the boiled: "Boiled meat is one of the most succulent and nourishing foods known to man. . . . One could say that boiled meat is to other dishes as bread is to other kinds of nourishment" (Article "Bouilli"). A half-century later, the dandy Brillat-Savarin will take precisely the opposite view: "We professors never eat boiled meat out of respect for principle, and because we have pronounced *ex cathedra* this incontestable truth: boiled meat is flesh without its juice. . . . This truth is beginning to become accepted, and boiled meat has disappeared in truly elegant dinners; it has been replaced by a roast filet, a turbot, or a matelote" (*Physiologie du goût*, VI, ¶2).

Therefore if the Czechs see in boiled meat a man's nourishment, it is perhaps because their traditional society was of a much more democratic character than that of their Slavonic and Polish neighbors. One could interpret in the same manner distinctions made—respectively by the

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Greeks, and the Romans and the Hebrew—on the basis of attitudes toward roasted and boiled, distinctions which have been noted by M. Piganiol in a recent article ("Le rôti et le bouilli," *A Pedro Bosch-Gimpera,* Mexico City, 1963).

Other societies make use of the same opposition in a completely different direction. Because boiling takes place without loss of substance, and within a complete enclosure, it is eminently apt to symbolize cosmic totality. In Guiana as well as in the Great Lakes region, it is thought that if the pot where game is boiling were to overflow even a little bit, all the animals of the species being cooked would migrate, and the hunter would catch nothing more. The boiled is life, the roasted death. Does not world folklore offer innumerable examples of the cauldron of immortality? But there has never been a spit of immortality. A Cree Indian rite admirably expresses this character of cosmic totality ascribed to boiled food. According to them, the first man was commanded by the Creator to boil the first berries gathered each season. The cup containing the berries was first presented to the sun, that it might fulfill its office and ripen the berries; then the cup was lifted to the thunder, whence rain is expected; finally the cup was lowered toward the earth, in prayer that it bring forth its fruits.

Hence we rejoin the symbolism of the most distant Indo-European past, as it has been reconstructed by Georges Dumézil: "To Mitra belongs that which breaks of itself, that which is cooked in steam, that which is well sacrificed, milk . . . and to Varuna that which is cut with the axe, that which is snatched from the fire, that which is ill-sacrificed, the intoxicating soma" (*Les dieux des Germains,* p. 60). It is not a little surprising—but highly significant—to find intact in genial mid–nineteenth-century philosophers of cuisine a consciousness of the same contrast between knowledge and inspiration, serenity and violence, measure and lack of measure, still symbolized by the opposition of the boiled and the roasted: "one becomes a cook but one is born a roaster" (Brillat-Savarin); "Roasting is at the same time nothing, and an immensity" (Marquis de Cussy).

Within the basic culinary triangle formed by the categories of raw, cooked and rotted, we have, then, inscribed two terms which are situated: one, the roasted, in the vicinity of the raw; the other, the boiled, near the rotted. We are lacking a third term, illustrating the concrete form of cooking showing the greatest affinity to the abstract category of the cooked. This form seems to us to be smoking, which like roasting implies an unmediated operation (without receptacle and without water) but differs from roasting in that it is, like boiling, a slow form of cooking, both uniform and penetrating in depth.

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Let us try to determine the place of this new term in our system of oppositions. In the technique of smoking, as in that of roasting, nothing is interposed between meat and fire except air. But the difference between the two techniques comes from the fact that in one the layer of air is reduced to a minimum, whereas in the other it is brought to a maximum. To smoke game, the American Indians (in whose culinary system smoking occupies a particularly important place) construct a wooden frame (a buccan) about five feet high, on top of which they place the meat, while underneath they light a very small fire which is kept burning for forty-eight hours or more. Hence for one constant—the presence of a layer of air—we note two differentials which are expressed by the oppositions *close/distant* and *rapid/slow*. A third differential is created by the absence of a utensil in the case of roasting (any stick doing the work of a spit), since the buccan is a constructed framework, that is, a cultural object.

In this last respect, smoking is related to boiling, which also requires a cultural means, the receptacle. But between these two utensils a remarkable difference appears, or more accurately, is instituted by the culture precisely in order, it seems, to create the opposition, which without such a difference might have remained too ill-defined to take on meaning. Pots and pans are carefully cared for and preserved utensils, which one cleans and puts away after use in order to make them serve their purpose as many times as possible; but the buccan *must be destroyed immediately after use,* otherwise the animal will avenge itself, and come in turn to smoke the huntsman. Such, at least, is the belief of those same natives of Guiana whose other symmetrical belief we have already noted: that a poorly-conducted boiling, during which the cauldron overflowed, would bring the inverse punishment, flight of the quarry, which the huntsman would no longer succeed in overtaking. On the other hand, as we have already indicated, it is clear that the boiled is opposed both to the smoked and the roasted in respect to the presence or absence of water.

But let us come back for a moment to the opposition between a perishable and a durable utensil which we found in Guiana in connection with smoking and boiling. It will allow us to resolve an apparent difficulty in our system, one which doubtless has not escaped the reader. At the start we characterized one of the oppositions between the roasted and the boiled as reflecting that between nature and culture. Later, however, we proposed an affinity between the boiled and the rotted, the latter defined as the elaboration of the raw by natural means. Is it not contradictory that a cultural method should lead to a natural result? To put it in other terms, what, philosophically, will be the value of the invention of pot-

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tery (and hence of culture) if the native's system associates boiling and putrefaction, which is the condition that raw food cannot help but reach spontaneously in the state of nature?

The same type of paradox is implied by the problematics of smoking as formulated by the natives of Guiana. On the one hand, smoking, of all the modes of cooking, comes closest to the abstract category of the cooked; and—since the opposition between raw and cooked is homologous to that between nature and culture—it represents the most "cultural" form of cooking (and also that most esteemed among the natives). And yet, on the other hand, its cultural means, the buccan, is to be immediately destroyed. There is a striking parallel to boiling, a method whose cultural means (the receptacles) are preserved, but which is itself assimilated to a sort of process of auto-annihilation, since its definitive result is at least verbally equivalent to that putrefaction which cooking should prevent or retard.

What is the profound sense of this parallelism? In so-called primitive societies, cooking by water and smoking have this in common: one as to its means, the other as to its results, is marked by duration. Cooking by water operates by means of receptacles made of pottery (or of wood with peoples who do not know about pottery, but boil water by immersing hot stones in it): in all cases these receptacles are cared for and repaired, sometimes passed on from generation to generation, and they number among the most durable cultural objects. As for smoking, it gives food that resists spoiling incomparably longer than that cooked by any other method. Everything transpires as if the lasting possession of a cultural acquisition entailed, sometimes in the ritual realm, sometimes in the mythic, a concession made in return to nature: when the result is durable, the means must be precarious, and vice-versa.

This ambiguity, which marks similarly, but in different directions, both the smoked and the boiled, is that same ambiguity which we already know to be inherent to the roasted. Burned on one side and raw on the other, or grilled outside, raw within, the roasted incarnates the ambiguity of the raw and the cooked, of nature and culture, which the smoked and the boiled must illustrate in their turn for the structure to be coherent. But what forces them into this pattern is not purely a reason of form: hence the system demonstrates that the art of cooking is not located entirely on the side of culture. Adapting itself to the exigencies of the body, and determined in its modes by the way man's insertion in nature operates in different parts of the world, placed then between nature and culture, cooking rather represents their necessary articulation. It partakes of both domains, and projects this duality on each of its manifestations.

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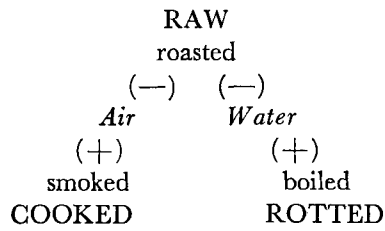
But it cannot always do so in the same manner. The ambiguity of the roasted is intrinsic, that of the smoked and the boiled extrinsic, since it does not derive from things themselves, but from the way one speaks about them or behaves toward them. For here again a distinction becomes necessary: the quality of naturalness which language confers upon boiled food is purely metaphorical: the "boiled" is not the "spoiled"; it simply resembles it. Inversely, the transfiguration of the smoked into a natural entity does not result from the nonexistence of the buccan, the cultural instrument, but from its voluntary destruction. This transfiguration is thus on the order of metonymy, since it consists in acting as if the effect were really the cause. Consequently, even when the structure is added to or transformed to overcome a disequilibrium, it is only at the price of a new disequilibrium which manifests itself in another domain. To this ineluctable dissymmetry the structure owes its ability to engender myth, which is nothing other than an effort to correct or hide its inherent dissymmetry.

To conclude, let us return to our culinary triangle. Within it we traced another triangle representing recipes, at least the most elementary ones: roasting, boiling and smoking. The smoked and the boiled are opposed as to the nature of the intermediate element between fire and food, which is either air or water. The smoked and the roasted are opposed by the smaller or larger place given to the element air; and the roasted and the boiled by the presence or absence of water. The boundary between nature and culture, which one can imagine as parallel to either the axis of air or the axis of water, puts the roasted and the smoked on the side of nature, the boiled on the side of culture *as to means;* or, *as to results,* the smoked on the side of culture, the roasted and the boiled on the side of nature:



The operational value of our diagram would be very restricted did it not lend itself to all the transformations necessary to admit other categories of cooking. In a culinary system where the category of the roasted is divided into roasted and grilled, it is the latter term (connoting the lesser distance of meat from fire) which will be situated at the apex of the recipe triangle, the roasted then being placed, still on

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the air-axis, halfway between the grilled and the smoked. We may proceed in similar fashion if the culinary system in question makes a distinction between cooking with water and cooking with steam: the latter, where the water is at a distance from the food, will be located halfway between the boiled and the smoked.

A more complex transformation will be necessary to introduce the category of the fried. A tetrahedron will replace the recipe triangle, making it possible to raise a third axis, that of oil, in addition to those of air and water. The grilled will remain at the apex, but in the middle of the edge joining smoked and fried one can place roasted-in-the-oven (with the addition of fat), which is opposed to roasted-on-the-spit (without this addition). Similarly, on the edge running from fried to boiled will be braising (in a base of water and fat), opposed to steaming (without fat, and at a distance from the water) as well as roasted-in-the-oven (with a base of fat but no water). The plan can be still further developed, if necessary, by addition of the opposition between animal and vegetable foodstuffs (if they entail differentiating methods of cooking), and by the distinction of vegetable foods into cereals and legumes, since unlike the former (which one can simply grill), the latter cannot be cooked without water or fat, or both (unless one were to let the cereals ferment, which requires water but excludes fire during the process of transformation). Finally, seasonings will take their place in the system according to the combinations permitted or excluded with a given type of food.

After elaborating our diagram so as to integrate all the characteristics of a given culinary system (and no doubt there are other factors of a diachronic rather than a synchronic nature: those concerning the order, the presentation and the gestures of the meal), it will be necessary to seek the most economical manner of orienting it as a grille, so that it can be superposed on other contrasts of a sociological, economic, esthetic or religious nature: men and women, family and society, village and bush, economy and prodigality, nobility and commonalty, sacred and profane, etc. Thus we can hope to discover for each specific case how the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure—or else resigns itself, still unconsciously, to revealing its contradictions.

(Translated from the French by Peter Brooks)

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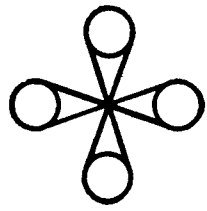

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Robert Garis

BALLET 66

Plisetskaya is the Joan Crawford of ballet. I thought this was a pretty good joke of mine after the first act of the Bolshoi's *Don Quixote,* and I still like it, but I didn't really intend to quote it here. Then as I watched the rest of *Don Quixote* and many other things, night after night, it occurred to me that my wisecrack had solved the mystery of the entire Russian people's intense dedication to classical ballet. The Bolshoi is the MGM of ballet: the spirit of Louis B. Mayer has found a resting place. It takes just his kind of showmanship to sponsor what my at first unbelieving eyes saw in *Don Quixote*: Plisetskaya's vulgar smashing vehemence, her unabashed mugging, the rambunctious but good-natured, clean family-style jokes, the expert brassy efficiency of the Spanish numbers, the trashy nightclub moodiness of the gypsy numbers. The Bolshoi show does take its departure from the vocabulary of classical ballet, true, but then many of Mayer's shows took their departure from serious drama and fiction. Efficient mass-appeal entertainment can use a culture tie-in because it knows how to keep culture in its place. No wonder the Bolshoi was such a hit in America.

This smash-hit style is most attractive in the "Highlights" program, where its intentions are most transparent and vulgarity can sometimes turn into genuine popularity. Most of the highlights get just the amount and kind of applause they ask for, and some of them deserve a lot. A terrible little number called "Melody" (music: Dvorak's "Songs My Mother Taught Me"; choreography: Radio City) got hearty respectful approval—this was high art. But a breezy acrobatic number called for some reason "Dunayevsky Waltz," danced with the most winning boastfulness by those two wonderful kids Vlasov and Vlasova, got wowed stamping and hollering—this was *fun.* I thought so too. Koshelev's resilient, spontaneous "Gopak" was a big hit Saturday evening, but his unannounced substitute's coarse performance had been just as big a hit at the matinee. The MGM approach blunts the audience's sensibilities to

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the difference between what is merely fast and what is really animated. In the full-length classics this company can be as brutal as a Billy Wilder comedy. Only *Giselle* escaped—perhaps here the spirit of Ulanova is most alive. Incidentally, my analogy can take care of the marvelous Ulanova! MGM had Garbo.

Understandably enough, the new *Nutcracker* got the least applause of all. With this ballet the only way to make an important impression is to follow the lead of the story and the score and to win the audience's heart by sweetness and sincerity. Of course, Balanchine can go further: he can make everybody on stage in the first act behave with the most beautifully natural good manners, he can deepen the fairy-tale charm by a dream-laden inspiration like the wandering bed, and he can make the whole thing feel important by great formal choreography in the second act. Robbins can make the dance of the mice into top-drawer American comedy and still fit it into the overall sincerity. But Grigorovich didn't start from the center of feeling in the story; he started at the beginning to smarten everything up, point by point, from the stylized bouncing entrance of parents and children (like a cute Christmas card), to the parents' dance in which the absurdly wigged women wriggled their hips suggestively, to the relentlessly consistent animated-doll movements of the second act. There was only one moment of sentiment, when the Nutcracker turns into the Prince and comes toward the girl with grand gestures of devotion. Vasiliev was splendid here, but the scale of emotion was a bit large and nothing else matched it. The snowflakes and the flowers were dull and square, the toy dances mechanically cute, the *grand pas de deux* heartlessly and grossly brilliant. All this made an exceptionally odd basis for Clive Barnes's contention that this piece represents some important kind of Soviet rapprochement with Western art. But since this gifted English critic began to write, and to write far too much, for the *New York Times,* much has been odd in his performances too.

About his contention that the Bolshoi dancers are simply ("let's face it") far superior to ours, there is perhaps more room for debate. Even perhaps about Plisetskaya: her vulgarity in *Don Quixote* established a record in my experience, and it's always fun to see a record broken. But her coarseness in *Raymonda* and *Swan Lake* was an ordinary affair. She is always insensitive and hard-hitting in movement and the exceptional vitality she may once have had—though I have never felt it—has left behind only those brutal snaps into position and that excessive speed that mars the dancing of far too many Bolshoi dancers who surpass her in other respects. In a sense many of these dancers are simply overtrained, driven too far and too hard in a single direction. For instance, the bal-

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lerina's spins in any adagio are too fast: too fast physically even for these athletes, none of whom can execute them without notable exertion and without listing off the perpendicular; too fast stylistically because they rob the movement of its necessary nobility. Then there are the incessant over-the-head lifts, splendid sometimes but used too often and with insufficient variety. It is exciting to see how well a ballerina can do an arabesque five feet off the ground, but too often it looks like a stunt and makes her look like a toy. The strenuous rehearsal of such stunts seems to leave no time for other things that can happen in a lift. In Bessmertnova's *Giselle,* which was mostly very beautiful, the lifts in the last act failed completely because they weren't phrased at all. Up she went, bang, like an elevator, with none of that sighing exhalation which is for us the whole point. There's a whole vocabulary of expressive effects that the Bolshoi doesn't know, all those nuances of phrasing and timing that seem to us to make dancing poetic. Even Bessmertnova in *Swan Lake* joined in the solemn heavy style of the others. Partnerships in adagio look like expert collaboration, not like the sensitive personal relationship we admire. And I am not speaking of wispy poetic effects. The Bolshoi dancers often lack sensitive animation even in a large rush of movement: concentration on single bravura feats gets in the way of a

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more interesting kind of excitement. What else can one say about a company that regularly breaks up the coda of a *grand pas de deux* into four sections? The Prince enters and does his leaps, then he leaves, the music stops and he comes back for a bow; Odile enters and does her fouettés, she leaves, the music stops and she comes back for a bow, and so on. It takes no super-refinement to see that the expressive effect of this coda should be one of gathering momentum and exhilaration, and that the Bolshoi's methods work actively against this effect. I find this failure representative of their style.

The really beautiful part of their style shows up in calm slow group dancing—the Dryads in *Don Quixote,* for instance, the Swans, the Wilis. Innocent of exhibitionism, these girls move through these large uncomplicated movements with a full-bodied easy nobility and grandeur that come to perfection in the dancing of the two principals who represent the Bolshoi's general style at its best—Samokhvalova and, to a lesser degree, Karelskaya. Samokhvalova, with a homely face and without the kind of body appropriate for heroine roles, comes to seem beautiful because she gives all her "notes" their full value and she comes to seem special because her full round limbs give this legato a very rich tone. Bessmertnova is as highly gifted, certainly, but her face and figure bring her within the range of our own standards, in terms of which she has yet to achieve subtlety and individuality. Maximova, it seems to me, never will: despite formidable expertise, her dancing seems destined always to match the Hollywood starlet ordinariness of her good looks. The company has no new Ulanova, nor any prima ballerina to equal the Kirov's radiant Sizova.

Vasiliev, Maximova's partner and husband, is far and away the company's great dancer and one of the greatest I have seen. His face and bearing are good-looking and manly, if somewhat ordinary, but his large body is exceptionally handsome and he has phenomenal energy and smooth and sensitive control over it. Most important, his dance instinct is wonderfully alert and alive, he has real rhythm, coil and spring. The most unusual thing about him is his total noneccentricity: he doesn't seem to want to be a great star, he fits into the company easily and willingly, and is simply immune to the vulgarity surrounding him. In the corny foolishness of *Walpurgisnacht* (a Walt Disney-like animation of Scenes from Poussin) he cooperates with every one of the cute effects, yet he alone conveys the godlike pagan spontaneity of movement, the cheerful glory of freedom, that the piece intends. He looks happy while Maximova is looking business-like. I should like to see him in *Giselle* to find out the extent of his more serious poetic expressivity, and I should

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like to see him partnering Sizova, who achieves the same idealization of the happy normal.

The Bolshoi has a large number of presentable-looking men with strong classical technique, and I don't mean to diminish the importance of this famous fact when I note how quickly one takes it for granted and how quickly therefore one sees that only Vasiliev is really first-class. Tikhonov and Lavrovsky are strong and clean, always a pleasure to see. Fadeyechev I saw too often: he is rather ill-favored, dull in stage presence, and except for his unexpectedly long legs in leaping he is not a notable dancer. Aside from Vasiliev, I admired most Koshelev, whose comical face limits him to character dancing: his Jester was the only bright moment in *Swan Lake,* though the part itself is not a particularly good one.

The Bolshoi's immense success is no surprise in a country that paid Louis B. Mayer the world's largest salary, and the almost equal success of the mild and tasteful Royal Danish Ballet is probably due to the expertise of another great showman, Sol Hurok. In the three performances I saw I was unlucky enough to miss Bruhn, Schanne, Simone and Laerkesen, four of the most important dancers. But what I saw could, I think, fairly be called the norm of this famous old company's work, and it was not a very exciting experience. The Danes are at their best in their own classics, Act III of *Napoli* and *Konservatoriet,* charming small-scale pieces danced with an admirably untarnished, sweet and unaffected spontaneity: this beautifully modest curatorship represents the best of the company's traditions and procedures. But a great company should not empty a greater classic like *Coppelia* of all importance by giving the lead to so insipid a dancer as Ruth Andersen, and there were other practices that made it impossible to think of the Royal Danish Ballet as a very important artistic enterprise. It is, again, admirably modest of them to show so international a repertory, but most of the ballets they brought over were weak and too many of them encourage the Danes' misplaced emphasis on dance "acting." Actually, there are very few first-class ballets anywhere in which acting is of primary importance. Bruhn's aristocratic elegance may make his Don José in Petit's trashy *Carmen* and his Jean in Culberg's trashy *Miss Julie* worth seeing once, perhaps even twice; but Bruhn is unique. I saw Kronstam as Don José: he is a splendid dancer and actor, but this didn't make the piece worth seeing. Moreover, the Danish performances suggest that a concern for acting tends to discourage attention to the expressivity of dancing in itself. I am not saying that dancers should pay attention only to their bodies and shouldn't perplex their pretty heads with thoughts about characterization. I am saying that if they do the latter to the detriment of the former

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they immediately become uninteresting. Hønningen as Carmen and Gelker as Miss Julie are both capable performers who showed every sign of having given careful thought to characterization. Yet both of them were thoroughly uninteresting and unconvincing because their dancing in itself was blandly neutral, with no distinctive expressive nuance. So you couldn't help noticing that Hønningen was no more a rowdy French slut than Gelker was a neurotic Swedish aristocrat—both of them obviously were extremely nice, good-looking, healthy and well-brought-up girls, but if they had danced more vividly you wouldn't have noticed that. We don't think of our Jillana as a "great actress-dancer" but she has that effect (which is all that matters) when she dances the Coquette in *Sonnambula* at Lincoln Center, because she performs all her special contraposto dance movements with bold inflection. This gets her immediately inside the role and then the acting seems to take care of itself: Jillana's malicious gestures as she spies on the lovers or as she whispers to the host have exactly the witty boldness of semi-caricature, semi-parody that *is* the characterization. Yet Jillana is personally a very friendly and normal-looking beauty; she puts the characterization over because she dances the movements sharply.

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Niels Kehlet, a wonderfully electric leaper, is fortunate enough to have the wrong kind of face and body for the Don José contest; all he can do therefore is dance as energetically as possible, so he becomes the most interesting person on the stage much of the time. The company has several other fairly good men, with an easy and open style, though no noticeable brillance. Among the many lovely girls I saw, only Lise La Cour had real distinction.

Looking at the Bolshoi and the Royal Danish Ballet, not to mention the inferior American Ballet, reminded me that some years ago during a lecture-demonstration at Amherst College Balanchine said something like this: "We are the best. Everybody goes to England and Russia to see the ballet but nobody comes to New York. But we are the best." This has its share of the inscrutability of a characteristic Balanchine utterance—very few people in fact go to England and Russia just for that reason, but a lot of us come to New York more often than we can really afford to see the New York City Ballet—and yet one could see what Balanchine meant. For the fact is that the New York City Ballet hasn't—except in one or two quarters—been quite fully enough praised for its dancing. There has been plenty of praise, but there has also been a hangover from the days long ago when it was legitimate to say that one went to see Balanchine's company mainly for the authoratative performances of his great ballets, and only occasionally for a great performance by a great dancer. Things are different now. The New York City Ballet has five or six dancers who are unsurpassed in the world and who form a lineup that is unequalled. I am thinking of Verdy, Farrell, Kent, Paul, McBride and Villella—I wish I had space to describe these marvelous dancers in detail. All I can do as a substitute is to second Balanchine's advice: go to New York to see the best company.

The season, as my discussion has shown, was chiefly interesting in that it gave us this opportunity to compare the dancing styles of some famous companies. The new ballets were mostly a disappointment. Balanchine's *Variations,* probably a major work, resembles *Episodes* and *Movements* in style, but I couldn't catch its special quality at a single viewing and I can offer only first impressions. The opening section seemed fairly routine; the middle section offered ingenious acrobatic workouts for the men but seemed lightweight in feeling; Farrell's very interesting solo is related to her third-act solo in *Don Quixote* though again I couldn't see its special quality. But *Variations* was distinctly a piece I wanted to see again, whereas his other new piece, the Brahms-Schönberg, wasn't—I saw it twice to check. The first two movements, with dreary music giving Balanchine nothing to work with, were a complete washout: for the first time in my experience Balanchine has failed to make the entrances and

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exits meaningful. The slow movement is better throughout and when Brahms begins a martial rhythm, it's a musical event at least, and Balanchine's invention responds with two witty solos, superbly danced by Kent and Villella. The zingara impetus of the last movement touched off a minor inspiration in Balanchine, and the taste and grace of this gypsy number, danced with lovely innocent abandon by Farrell, was a great relief after the Bolshoi gypsy style. Two fairly nice movements, then—not much from someone of Balanchine's stature.

In *Jeux* Taras brought Villella on stage repeatedly to look puzzled by what Hayden and Kent were doing, alone and together. They were both worth looking at, particularly Hayden dressed as Baby Snooks; but the piece never got anywhere in dramatizing its Lesbian and other relations. Cunningham's *Summerspace* commanded more attention because of its cool lack of interest in either dramatic relations or the regular formal relations we are used to in ballet abstraction. This piece made me feel as old-fashioned as I feel listening to a Charlie Parker record. I think I see what both these cool artists are doing but I can't get very interested in it. I respect Cunningham's quiet nonconformism: his refusal to center his choreography on the stage-canvas (using now a little corner over at left front, now only a straight line at the back, and so on); his decision to keep his dancers in dramatic and formal isolation from one another except for a few accidental and fruitless encounters; his unconventional time structure (keeping his piece going on for an arbitrary length of time at pretty much the same dynamic level, with no climaxes or cadences); his many original inventions in movement. The piece is so intelligently sure of itself that before you can say you aren't very interested it has already quietly answered that it never asked you to be. But I don't see why art should give up the ambition to be very interesting.

Of the American Ballet's new pieces I missed Tetley's *Ricercare,* without much regret I will confess, though I heard it was less embarrassing than last year's *Sargasso.* Bolender's *Kontraste* timidly imitates late-Balanchine and has no character. *Balladen der Liebe,* a piece by the company's ballet master, Enrique Martinez, is an extremely long double-date in a cliché romantic style; you keep thinking that *some* little differentiation between the two couples is bound to materialize, but none does. The important new piece was the second act of *Swan Lake* in the authoritative version formerly danced by the English Royal Ballet. It is very distinguished: good-looking, natural and dramatically convincing. Toni Lander danced it tastefully and looked good in the costume—a pleasant surprise. This, and D'Antuono's growing ease, and the further deterioration of even the hard brillance that is Serrano's only distinc-

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tion, were the only new developments in the dancing of this generally depressing company.

The provincial companies have recently come in for attention because they have come in for foundation money. One feels friendly but not very optimistic toward these enterprises. I saw three-quarters of the Boston Ballet season, which is to say that I saw three evenings of ballet. (I passed up a Christmas *Nutcracker* with Tallchief.) In short, the Boston Ballet isn't really a ballet company at all—it is some recitals by a ballet school. Now I am sure that this is all that even a sizable foundation grant makes possible, and the endeavor is an honorable one, but I don't see how the gap between this and the status of a real ballet company can be bridged. Any important dancers developed will inevitably be lured away to a company where they can dance regularly—and how many such spaces are in fact available in the few professional companies we have? Actually, most of the major roles at the Boston Ballet were danced by guest artists from the New York City Ballet. The repertory included several Balanchine pieces which were good to see in themselves, and another pleasant result was that Sara Leland appeared, and was excellent, in more important roles than she usually dances at Lincoln Center. The company did a thoroughly presentable *Donizetti Variations* all by themselves, in which Carol Ravich and Linda diBona proved to be charmingly neat and accurate in style, as they were in all the other performances. I enjoyed the dancing of Warren Lynch too. But the *corps de ballet* for Balanchine's *Serenade* was frankly inadequate. Hans Brenaa mounted the third act of *Napoli;* this too was danced excellently by the company's own dancers, and there was an adequate *Sylphides.* The rest of the repertory was bad: Dollar's ubiquitous *Le Combat;* Moncion's *Pastorale;* the premiere of *Time Plus 6,* yet another of Anna Sokolow's jivey bores about young anguish and revolt, outdated in idiom as always; two insignificant other premieres by Joyce Trisler and E. Virginia Williams, the company's director. An ambitious enterprise, and untold amounts of hard good work went into it, but the result was three performances. Ballet is in no serious sense of the word established in Boston.

Ballet is after all a peculiar business. If our country can support that astonishingly large number of at least semi-professional orchestras, why can't it support as few as, say, twenty-five ballet companies? No reason at all, say the foundations, and one wants to applaud the fact that they give money to start things up. But the analogy is faulty. There are all sorts of differences between the two things, one of the most important being that a symphony orchestra in a medium-size American city has an immense repertory of first-class music to draw on, and to use to draw

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people in. The viable ballet repertory can hardly amount to more than ten percent of the musical repertory, probably no more than two percent. A ballet company therefore needs to have on hand a prolific major choreographer even to have a hope of popular, not to mention artistic, success. For my taste, there are at most three such choreographers working today, and therefore most of the large companies in the world are worth seeing only because they have dancers of a caliber that no provincial company can hope for. But even the most indulgent taste would say that there are no more than about ten significant choreographers around. It is really a hopeless prospect. I am not saying that the foundation money is wasted in being given to the provincial companies; I am saying only that it is in the highest degree unrealistic to hope for any large-scale results.

Granted all this it was wise of the foundation to give the money mostly to schools in some way connected with Balanchine. The result of this decision was that last year Boston saw two major modern ballets that they might not have seen otherwise, *The Prodigal Son* (with Villella) and *Serenade,* and the year before Boston saw *Concerto Barocco.* But ballet is so peculiar that it was just this fact, that Balanchine's disciples got the money, that aroused the most virulent attacks.

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MODERN DOCUMENTS

WASHINGTON B.C.

The Bureau of Misplaced Persons

Our new intellectual adviser to the White House had the following things to say about intellectuals when interviewed in a nationally syndicated column. We offer it as his introduction to our readers:

" 'Now as for "intellectuals," ' he said, 'the term intellectual has been batted about too loosely. When you mention intellectuals today, who do you mean? There is a broad group. The ones we talk about when we mention the President's relations with them are only a small body of self-appointed people who live in affluent alienation on Cape Cod and fire off salvos against the vulgarity of the masses.

" 'But this is a well-orchestrated outfit with fine Madison Avenue techniques. Their way of criticizing makes the group seem bigger than it is. The main problem is that an awful lot of these guys prefer style to performance.'

" 'The strange thing about it,' his wife said, 'is that the ones who are criticizing so much are the ones whose sons will go to graduate school and have no worries about being drafted and sent to Vietnam.'

" 'Are you supposed to build a bridge from the White House to these people?' he was asked.

" 'That can't be done. It's just a small group of people and it won't change. Besides I don't think the President needs a full-time plenipotentiary to the intellectuals. The function I'll have in Washington is up to him, anyway. Let the President give the job description. I can interpret certain kinds of opinion for him. Beyond that, I'm under no illusion I'll step in and begin advising an entire government.'

" 'These alienated intellectuals,' he was asked, 'who are they?'

" 'Mainly the New York artsy-craftsy set. They're in the Partisan Review and the New York Review of Books and publications like that. The West Side jackal bins, I call them. They intend to launch a revolution from Riverside Drive. Names, there are plenty of names who write for them. Alfred Kazin writes, then Irving Howe, Dr. Spock, Norman Mailer.' "

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ARGUMENTS

ANARCHISM LEFT AND RIGHT

There has recently been a modest upsurge of interest in Anarchism. Several excellent volumes have appeared on the movement in the last few years,[1] and a fledgling group known as the New York Federation of Anarchists has formed (true to Anarchist principles, it has a "spokesman" rather than a leader, and refers to itself as a "discussion group," not an organization). But as yet interest in Anarchism is minimal, which to my mind is unfortunate, for Anarchism has, I believe, remarkable relevance for certain contemporary problems and particularly for those pointed to by the emerging "New Left."[2]

The blanket term "Anarchism" does not do justice to the varied movements and personalities usually subsumed under its label. The more

1. Since 1962 we have had two histories of the Anarchists and two anthologies of their writings. George Woodcock's *Anarchism* (Meridian, 1962) is a brilliant volume, written with the special insight and eloquence of an adherent, while James Joll's *The Anarchists* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964) is a sophisticated, though less compelling and comprehensive analysis. The anthology edited by Irving L. Horowitz, *The Anarchists* (Dell, 1964) concentrates on the "classics" of Anarchist literature, while Leonard Krimerman and Lewis Perry in *Patterns of Anarchy* (Anchor Books, 1966) have collected less familiar writings and have excerpted and introduced them with so much skill as to give us a fully realized portrait of the movement, one true to its complexities. There had already existed a considerable library on Anarchism—for example, the works of Max Nettlau, G.D.H. Cole and Rudolph Rocker—but the four new volumes, authoritative and fluent, make the ideas and events of the movement more accessible than they have been.

2. In using the term "New Left" I exclude certain groups frequently admitted under that title—the Progressive Labor Party and the DuBois Clubs—which are more correctly seen as continuations of the old Marxist Left, disciplined, bureaucratic, ideological, anti-Bohemian. By "New Left" I mean especially SNCC and SDS, but also more localized groupings like the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley (FSM) and the Mississippi Free Democratic Party (MFDP).

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one reads of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon or Peter Kropotkin and the more one learns of the way the movement differed from country to country and from period to period, the less confidently one speaks of *the* Anarchist tradition. Its internal variations were pronounced. The peasant Anarchists, especially in Spain, were fiercely anti-industrial and anti-urban and wished to withdraw entirely from the State to live in separate communities based on mutual aid. The anarcho-syndicalists of France put special emphasis on the value of a general strike and looked to the trade unions as the future units of a new society. Bakunin advocated violence, Tolstoy abhorred it; Proudhon believed in retaining individual ownership of certain forms of property, Errico Malatesta called for its abolition in every form; Max Stirner's ideal was the egotist engaged in "the war of each against all," Kropotkin's was human solidarity, a society based on the union of voluntary communes.

These are only some of the divisions of strategy, personality and geography which characterized the Anarchist movement. What bound these disparate elements together—what makes plausible the term "Anarchism" in reference to all of them—is their hostility to authority, especially that embodied in the State, but including any form of rule by man over man, whether it be by parent, teacher, lawyer or priest. The Anarchists were against authority, they said, because they were for life—not life as most men had ever lived it, but life as it might be lived. Anarchists argued, in a manner reminiscent of Rousseau, that human aggression and cruelty were the products of imposed restraints; the "good" infant was ruined by "bad" institutions. They insisted that the authoritarian upbringing most children were subjected to stifled spontaneity, curiosity, initiative, individuality—in other words, prevented possession of themselves. If they could be raised "free"—economically freed from the struggle for existence, intellectually freed from the tyranny of custom, emotionally freed from the need to revenge their own mutilation by harming others—they could express those "natural" feelings of fraternity and mutual assistance which are innate to the human species.

Since Freud's return to Calvin, we are far less certain than the Anarchists about the infinite goodness of the "unspoiled" child. Aggression, conflict and frustration may be maximized by our culture, but those qualities do not seem wholly cultural in origin. Yet if advances in psychological understanding have made the Anarchist view of human nature appear too uncomplicated in its optimism, they have, in a more circumscribed way, given that view certain new supports. Norman O. Brown's reading of the Freudian legacy has reinforced Anarchist emphasis on the destructive influence of imposed restraints. Erik Erikson (along

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with Hartmann, Kris and others) has defined "natural" stages of development each of which marks an advance of mixed loss and gain, but an advance clearly preferable to the impairment which results when development is interfered with by adverse environmental influences. And a number of reputable psychologists, if less eminent and sophisticated than Brown and Erikson, are employing rhetoric and drawing conclusions still more directly reminiscent of the Anarchists' optimistic terminology:

> [If] . . . loving, understanding respect for [the child's] needs and feelings are provided . . . then the child gradually becomes socialized of its own accord with a minimum of tyranny and discipline . . . hostility, violence, and cruelty of all sorts, including wars and self-destructiveness, have their ultimate source in the minds of improperly matured men; and they are prevented by proper childrearing.

The Anarchist belief in the harmonious possibilities of human development—and the threat to that development posed by a hostile environment—is neither utopian nor outmoded; with some psychologists it finds partial, with others almost total, confirmation.

Additional support can be found in certain practical experiments undertaken in recent years. In the Scandinavian "adventure playgrounds," where children are given materials with which to build but are spared adult supervision, individual initiative and friendly cooperation turn out to be mutually supportive rather than mutually exclusive. And in A. S. Neall's Summerhill self-regulation does lead both to personal independence and to a recognition of the inviolability of others; indeed Summerhill is, in miniature, an Anarchist new world come to pass.

The Anarchists' distrust of the State as an instrument of oppression, the tool by which the privileged and powerful maintained themselves, is generally associated with nineteenth-century "classical" liberalism, with John Stuart Mill and, in this country, with the Jeffersonians. But by the end of the nineteenth century and increasingly in the twentieth, liberals began to regard the State as an ally rather than an enemy; only the national government, it was felt, had the power and resources to accomplish regulation and reform, to prevent small groups of self-interested men from exploiting their fellows.

Today the pendulum has begun to swing back again. In the liberal —but more especially in the radical—camp, the federal government has lost some of its appeal; veneration is giving way to distrust; from an instrument of liberation, the central government is once more being viewed as a bulwark of conservatism. This shift is the result of accumulated disappointments. The regulatory agencies set up to supervise the monopolists have been discovered to be operating in the interests of the

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monopolists; farm-subsidy programs have been exposed as benefiting the richer operators while dispossessing tenant farmers and sharecroppers; the urban renewal program seems to be aggravating rather than alleviating the housing problems of low-income groups; civil rights legislation has added to the sheaf of paper promises without making any notable dent in existing inequities; the poverty program begins to look like one more example of the fallacy of treating symptoms as if they were causes; and the traditional hostility between big government and big business has given way to a cozy partnership whereby the two enterprises have become almost indistinguishable in interest.

The result of these—and other—experiences is disillusionment with government, with the honesty of its intentions and, far more disheartening, with its ability—even *had* it the best will in the world—to accomplish needed reforms. Thus Paul Booth, national secretary of SDS has recently said, "Real change doesn't come from bureaucratic liberal institutions, or from legislature. Laws always get passed, but the poor are still poor." SNCC as well as SDS has shifted to "localism," to community

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organizing, "participatory" democracy, decentralized decision-making and, on a personal level, to a freedom in dress, speech, sexual mores, *et al.,* which suggests a belief that ultimately salvation must come on an individual basis.

Like the Anarchists before them, these young radicals care much less about participating in the American Dream (a hope which in 1960 had been chief impetus for the Greensboro sit-ins) than about restructuring it. They desire not further "progress," as this society currently defines it in terms of greater efficiency and wealth, but rather, as George Woodcock has said of the Anarchists, "retreat along the lines of simplification." They represent, again like the Anarchists, an ascetic, moralistic urge to cultivate the virtues rather than to gratify the appetites, and they associate the virtues with poverty, with a rural "peasantry" and with those *déclassé* urban elements whose "anti-social" (even criminal) behavior echoes in exaggerated form their own alienation. In all of this, the young radicals of SNCC and SDS are far removed from the Marxists' stress on economics, fear of the *lumpenproletariat,* distrust of cultural experimentation—though many persist in claiming that the New Left already is Marxist (the FBI-HUAC view) or should become Marxist (the Old Left view).

As the New Left represented by SNCC and SDS shifts away from faith in the federal government, it has begun to employ rhetoric traditionally associated with the Right: the supreme value of the individual, the need to dismantle centralized authority, to resist bureaucratic invasion and to develop self-help, self-reliance, self-respect. The Left has begun to draw the equation long favored by the Right: that "centralism" and dehumanization go hand in hand, or alternately, that individual autonomy is a prerequisite for character. And this, ironically, at a time when the Right itself has begun to vacate that position in response to the growing partnership between big government and big business. Thus the two ends of the political spectrum in this country have started to converge—at least in terms of vocabulary, if not in terms of interests or goals.

But the Anarchist tradition is not of equal relevance to the New Left and to the traditional Right, except that it feeds their current distrust —in one case burgeoning, in the other diminishing—of centralized power. the Right has never been so much anti-authority, as simply anti- one kind of authority—that associated with the federal government. To the Right, authority has been bad when it emanates from Washington, but good when associated with the Church, the Law, the schoolroom, the home, the Anglo-Saxon way. Far from being hostile to

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established opinion, the Right galvanizes its legions in its defense. On the other hand, New Left organizations such as SDS and SNCC distrust authority in a more inclusive way. They do not believe in *any* established pieties—in thought, dress, speech patterns, art forms, social and sexual behavior, politics, or even in stimulants (pot not booze). They are conscious rebels against all imposed patterns, established institutions, received verities. SNCC and SDS are thus genuinely revolutionary: they see almost nothing in the past—and certainly not in the present—admirable enough to preserve. (The Right is prone to admire anything associated with the past—or rather with the myths it has invented about the past.) The New Left stands in direct descent from the Anarchists, who always stressed, and not only rhetorically, the values of spontaneity, experimentation, "primitivism," individual style and free expression.

Though Anarchism and the New Left are separated by wide differences, as, for example, the Left's reliance on politics, with its implied acceptance of "organization" and "government," the Anarchists did formulate some of the problems and did define many of the attitudes which are once more prominent. Hence, in seeing how an earlier generation of radicals of roughly comparable temperament sought its answers, today's New Left might better articulate its own. Yet to judge from their formal writings, SNCC and SDS seem little aware of their Anarchist forebears. Such an awareness will hardly provide today's radicals with a definitive style or with ready-made solutions, but it could lead them to clarifications and to further lines of inquiry.

Martin B. Duberman

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FOR ART'S SAKE

Saul Bellow's animosity toward the present generation of literary intellectuals has long been smoldering. It was one of the urgent animating emotions of *Herzog*. Recently in an address to the PEN Congress in New York (a version of which he printed in the July 10 issue of the *New York Times Book Review*) Mr. Bellow renewed the attack with ferocity and precision. It is an indictment which critics and teachers of literature would be unwise to ignore, for it aims at the heart of their enterprise, an enterprise which Mr. Bellow sees not only as futile but as actually dangerous to the well-being of literature.

Bellow reopens, with surprising harshness, the long-standing feud between art and criticism, relatively dormant since Eliot, Pound and a group of American critic-poets were able to appropriate both in effecting a massive revolution in taste. In the wake of the modernist movement in literature, with its accompanying explosion of critical activity, it was inevitable that hostilities should be resumed, for that movement affected art quite differently from the way it affected criticism. It endowed criticism with sophisticated techniques and an omniverous and unquenchable appetite. But its liberating effect on subsequent literature was more than balanced by the massive *fact* of the modernist writers, the intimidating largeness of their achievement. It was out of neither perverseness nor obtuseness that Dr. Leavis could write, a quarter of a century after Lawrence's death, that "he is still the great writer of our own phase of civilization." The vanguard literature with which the young man of the fifties had to come to terms included many of the same books that had confronted his predecessor of the twenties.

This imbalance in the last decades between the progress of poesy and progress of criticism was exacerbated by the fact that the modernist classics were consciously "difficult" books, books which in a sense presupposed a subtle cognitive criticism that could interpret them and create the atmosphere in which they could be appreciated. That atmosphere,

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now triumphantly established, is, in Bellow's own words, "disaffected, subversive, radical." What seems to irritate him even more is that, as befits an Age of Criticism, it is an atmosphere of ideas. The most curious element in Bellow's speech is his intense animus not just toward certain positions, but toward ideas in general. Thus he accuses critics of doing little more than converting the modern classics "into other forms of discourse, translating imagination into opinion, or art into cognitions." He argues that the "dehumanization of art" which Ortega described "may in part be a result of the pressure they put upon it for meanings." Behind these charges lies the conventional label of parasitism—which no critic would wish wholly to deny—but bearing a strange new emphasis: criticism is not simply a secondary activity but, by virtue of being cognitive and discursive, a completely inauthentic one. If Bellow spares us the standard broadside against the "Shakespeare industry" or the "Joyce industry" it is only because his target is not some deviation from the critical norm but criticism itself. His attack is not limited to *PMLA* and the flood of warmed-over dissertations that pours from the university presses; it is directed more against the quarterlies and the New York "literati." He concedes that the "meanings" they seek in literature may be more than academic jargon, that they may even be "manufacturing 'intellectual history,' " but such is the ambience of his speech that by the end " 'intellectual history,' " even without the inverted commas, takes on as much a pejorative connotation as the ersatz "manufacturing." "Historicist" critics, Bellow concludes, "labor to create vanguard conditions" willfully, by decision, after "reading books of cultural history. . . . But genius is always, without strain, avant-garde." How true. And yet how pernicious an equation: that which is reflective, arrived at by conscious choice, is prima facie not genuine. Yet how many literary movements, from Romanticism to Surrealism to the *nouveau roman,* have been self-conscious in just such a "historicist" way.

The ironies of Bellow's position are manifold and, on the whole, appalling. What novelist writing today, what novelist since Thomas Mann has been more intimately involved with ideas and with cultural and intellectual history than Bellow (the most live part of whose last novel was a series of polemical outbursts much like the present speech)? Nor can we easily account for the vast personal bitterness that seems to lie behind both the tone of the speech and its shadowy *ad hominem* references. Keats, who was subjected to some of the most snobbish, ungenerous and uncomprehending reviews ever written, showed far less resentment than Bellow does. Yet Bellow's novels have always been favorites of the critics—sometimes beyond their proper merits—especially

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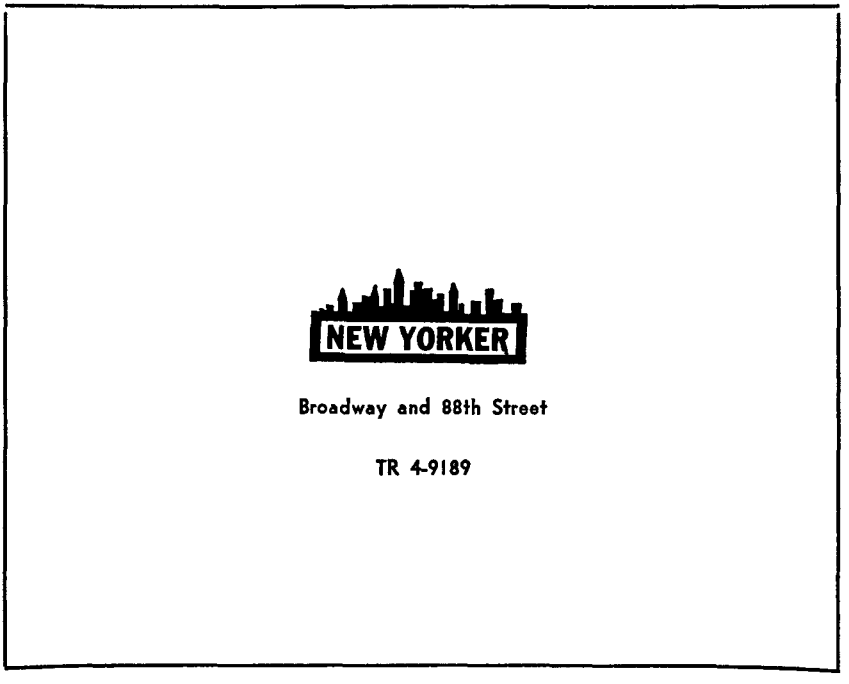
of those New York literati he now attacks. Yet he and his contemporaries, he complains, have been denied "creative scope." What Bellow seems to resent is that for all that approbation, the ultimate tribute, the mantle of Proust, Joyce, Mann *et al.*, has been withheld, an injustice which he can only attribute to a professorial conspiracy. There is something paranoid in Bellow's use of the professors as surrogates for an implicit attack on modern literature itself and as scapegoats for the deficiencies of his own real but limited genius. Ultimately the "disaffected, subversive, radical" quality of modern literature comes to seem like an invention of criticism and Proust, Joyce and Mann, bizarre creations, become no more than a fictitious holding company for concealed and self-serving private interests.

Of course Bellow is partly right. "Alienation" and "the absurd" have in some hands become a deadening new orthodoxy, a fashionable stance mechanically adopted. But this does not mean that these concepts have outlived their historical life, any more than had the ideas of Marx and Freud after they had been similarly vulgarized. Nothing in the literature of Bellow and his contemporaries—certainly not the unconvincing



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conclusion of *Herzog*—yet indicates an imaginative return to "rooted norms." Few of us will fail to respond to the observed truth in Bellow's account of the intellectuals' relation to literature: "they talk about it; they treasure it; they make careers of it; they become an élite through it; they adorn themselves with it; they make discourse of it. It is their material, their capital." Nor should we be insensitive to the moral vulnerability of combining radical and subversive ideas with a comfortable middle-class existence. Yet unless we share Bellow's animus against discourse, we need not condemn such a combination as mere hypocrisy. Thought and action have not so simple a relation that the one is valueless unless conjoined directly with the other. Ideas can have a life of their own, and affect practice in unexpectedly mediate ways.

Bellow's position would be more attractive if he actually were asking the intellectuals to live out their radical ideas, to emulate the Russian intelligentsia rather than the German. Instead he seems to demand that they give them up, that they come to accept "rooted norms" as he has come to accept the middlebrow public that has at last, deservedly or not, embraced him for its own. (It is symbolically appropriate that he should present his attack to the readers of the *Times Book Review,* upon whose latent—and perhaps "healthy"?—prejudices against both modern literature and academic criticism he implicitly relies.)

It is in this acceptance that Bellow's speech is most deficient, especially in the impoverished sense of the function of criticism to which it leads. Bellow means to shock, and the scandal is complete if we recall those famous formulas of Arnold in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time": "disinterestedness," "the free play of the mind," "to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." From this to what Bellow calls "redescription" is a long, long fall, but for all the exegetical hackwork that passes for thought today the fall I think is largely Bellow's own. Arnold readily agreed that "the critical power is of lower rank than the creative," but he could imagine a fruitful interaction between the two, because he endowed both with functions that were at once creative and truly critical, that involved changing the world. He would immediately have seen the *non sequitur,* as well as the default of criticism, in Bellow's assertion that "we now have a growing class of intellectuals or near-intellectuals. There are millions of college graduates." In spite of being a respectable academic and school inspector, Arnold was a witty and implacable critic of the quality of life of the Victorian middle-class. In that great essay, as a recent observer has remarked, "it is

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more than the function of literary criticism that is being discussed; it is the general function of critical intelligence in a civilized community."

Arnold was acutely aware of what Bellow scarcely acknowledges: the *political* dimension of criticism. The one thing almost absent from Bellow's speech is the real world (except as material evidence of the bad faith of the literati). One gets the impression that history is little more than a constant struggle between artists and critics for the possession of the Word and the favor of the *Zeitgeist,* a Manichean struggle of the forces of light with the forces of darkness.

To be avant-garde is not merely to be different from what came before, but to alter radically the consciousness of the age. Art alone works and mirrors the great changes in human sensibility, but criticism often implements those changes concretely in the arena of the actual world. One contemporary instance will suffice. Though Eliot and Lawrence were his avowed originals, Dr. Leavis has had a larger immediate influence on English life. In his hands Eliot's poetry and Lawrence's novels have been transformed from art-speech into literary history, educational theory and practice, cultural criticism, verbal analysis, morals and sociology. This of course may be the very beast that Bellow is attacking, but if so we should recognize that it is not, as Bellow thinks, a new beast, but one resolutely in the critical tradition of Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold. It is a tradition that respects literature too much to ignore its "meanings" and which invokes those meanings as a radical and civilizing standard of value within the human community. Against this tradition Bellow confines art to the sacred keeping of the artist and defends the moral and political *status quo* of the great "rooted" masses.

Morris Dickstein

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VARIETY

A LITTLE THEORY OF DESTINY

Certain peoples—the Russians, for example, and the Spanish—are so haunted by themselves that they *pose themselves* as a unique problem: their development, singular at every point, compels them to fall back on their series of anomalies, on the miracle or the insignificance of their fate.

Russia's literary beginnings were, in the last century, a kind of apogee, a lightning-like success which inevitably disturbed her: it was only natural that she should be a surprise to herself and that she should exaggerate her importance. Dostoevsky's characters put Russia on the same footing as God, since they extend to the former the mode of interrogation applied to the latter: must we believe in Russia? Must we deny her? Does she really exist, or is she nothing but an excuse? To question oneself in this fashion is to pose a regional problem in theological terms. But for Dostoevsky, as a matter of fact, Russia, far from being a regional problem, was a universal one, to the same degree as the existence of God. Such an approach, abusive and preposterous, was possible only in a country whose abnormal evolution must astound or confound men's minds. It is hard to imagine an Englishman wondering if England has a meaning or not, or assigning her, with tremendous rhetoric, a mission: he knows he is English, and that is sufficient. The evolution of his country does not entail an essential interrogation.

Among the Russians, Messianism derives from an inner uncertainty aggravated by pride, from a determination to assert their faults, to impose them on others, to discharge upon them a suspect overflow. The aspiration to "save" the world is the morbid phenomenon of a people's youth.

Spain is self-absorbed for the contrary reasons. She, too, had dazzling beginnings, but they are faraway now. Having arrived too soon, she con-

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vulsed the world, then allowed herself to decline and fall: and one day, I had a revelation of that fall. It was in Valladolid, in the Casa Cervantes. An ordinary-looking old woman was standing next to me, looking at the portrait of Philip III: "A madman," I said. She turned toward me: "It was with him that our decadence began." I was at the heart of the problem. "Our decadence!" There we have it, I thought, in Spain decadence is a popular concept, a national cliché, an official slogan. The nation which in the sixteenth century offered the world a spectacle of magnificence and madness—is now reduced to codifying her inertia. If they had had time for it, doubtless the last Romans would not have proceeded otherwise; but they were unable to ponder their fall, for the Barbarians already surrounded them. Better provided for, the Spanish have had the leisure (three centuries!) to meditate on their miseries, to saturate themselves in them. Gossips of despair, improvisers of illusions, they live in a kind of melodious asperity, a *tragic nonseriousness,* which saves them from vulgarity, from happiness and from success. Should they someday exchange their ancient baubles for other, more modern ones, they would nonetheless remain marked by so long an absence. Incapable of falling into step with "civilization," bigots or anarchists, they could never renounce their *inactuality.* How could they overtake the other nations, how could they be up-to-date, when they have exhausted the best of themselves ruminating on death, befouling themselves with it, turning it into a visceral experience? Constantly retrogressing toward the essential, they have capsized out of their depths—i.e., in them. The notion of decadence would not preoccupy them so much if it did not translate in terms of history their weakness for the void, their obsession with the skeleton. Nothing surprising in the fact that for each of them, his country should be *his* problem. Reading Ganivet, Unamuno or Ortega, we realize that for them Spain is a paradox which touches them intimately and which they cannot reduce to a rational formula. They return to it constantly, fascinated by the attraction of the insoluble which it represents. Unable to solve it by analysis, they contemplate Don Quixote, in whom the paradox is even more insoluble, being a symbol. . . . We do not imagine a Valéry or a Proust meditating on France in order to discover himself: a country intact, without the deep rifts that breed anxiety, a nontragic nation, France is not a case: having succeeded, having concluded her fate, how could she be "interesting"?

It is the merit of Spain to propose a type of unwonted development, a destiny both inspired and incomplete. (One might say, a Rimbaud incarnated in a collectivity.) Think of Spain's frenzied pursuit of gold, her collapse into anonymity, then think of the conquistadors, their ban-

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ditry and their piety, the way they associated the Gospels with murder, the Crucifix with the sword. At its finest moments, Catholicism was sanguinary, as is proper for any truly inspired religion.

Conquest and Inquisition—parallel phenomena, products of Spain's imposing vices. As long as she was strong, she excelled in massacres, and to them brought not only her partiality for ceremony, but also the innermost realms of her sensibility. Only cruel peoples have the chance to approach the very sources of life, its palpitations, its kindling arcana: life reveals its essence only to eyes inflamed with blood-lust. . . . How can we believe in philosophies when we know what pale faces they reflect? The habit of reasoning, of speculation, is the sign of a vital inadequacy, a decline in affectivity. To think methodically, a man must, with the help of his deficiencies, forget himself, no longer be an integral part of his ideas: philosophy, the privilege of individuals and of *biologically* superficial peoples.

It is almost impossible to talk to a Spaniard about anything but his country, a closed universe that is the subject of his lyricism and his reflections, an absolute province, outside the world. Alternately exalted and downcast, he turns his morose and dazzled eyes upon Spain; being drawn and quartered is his form of vigor. If he allows himself a future, he does not really believe in it. His discovery: the somber illusion, the pride of despair; his genius: the genius of nostalgia.

Whatever his political orientation, the Spaniard or the Russian who questions himself about his country treats the only question that matters in his eyes. We understand why neither Spain nor Russia has produced a major philosopher. It is because the philosopher must attack ideas as a spectator; before assimilating them, making them his own, he must consider them from outside, dissociate himself from them, weigh them and, if need be, *play* with them; then, with the help of maturity, he elaborates a system with which he never altogether identifies himself. It is this superiority with regard to their own philosophy we admire in the Greeks. The same is true for all those who attach themselves to the problem of knowledge and make it the essential object of their meditation. This problem troubles neither the Russians nor the Spanish. Unsuited to intellectual contemplation, they maintain quite bizarre relations with the Idea. If they challenge it, they always have the *under hand*; it seizes, subjugates, oppresses them; consenting martyrs, they ask only to suffer for it. With them, we are far from the domain where the mind plays with itself and with things, far from any methodical perplexity.

The abnormal evolution of Russia and Spain has therefore led them to question themselves as to their own destiny. But these are two great

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nations, despite their lacunae and their accidents of growth. For the minor peoples, how much more tragic the national problem becomes! No sudden expansion here, no gradual decadence either. Without a prop in the future or in the past, they weigh upon *themselves*: a long sterile meditation is the result. Their evolution cannot be abnormal, for they do not evolve. What is left to them? Resignation to themselves, since, outside, there is all of History from which, precisely, they are excluded.

Their nationalism, which we take for a farce, is actually a mask by which they try to hide their own drama and to forget, in a frenzy of claims, their incapacity to graft themselves onto events: painful lies, an exasperated reaction against the scorn they fear to deserve, a way of conjuring away their secret obsession with themselves. In simpler terms: a people which is a torment to itself is a sick people. But whereas Spain suffers for having exited from History, and Russia for seeking, in spite of all opposition, to install herself there, the minor nations struggle in order to have none of these reasons to lose patience or to despair. Cursed with an original flaw, they cannot remedy it by disappointment, or by dreams. Hence they have no other resources than to be haunted by themselves. An obsession not lacking in beauty, since it leads to nothing and interests no one.

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There are countries which enjoy a kind of benediction, a kind of grace: everything succeeds for them, even their misfortunes, even their catastrophes; and there are others which cannot carry it off, whose very triumphs are equivalent to failures. When they seek to assert themselves, to leap forward, an external fatality intervenes to break their spring and bring them back to their point of departure. All occasions are taken from them, even that of ridicule.

To be French is obvious enough: one neither suffers from it, nor does one rejoice over it; one possesses a certainty which justifies the old interrogation: "How can one be a Persian?"

The paradox of being a Persian (or as the case would have it, a Rumanian) is a torment one must know how to exploit, a defect by which one must profit. I confess I once regarded it as a disgrace to belong to an ordinary nation, to a collectivity of victims about whose origin no illusion was permitted. I believed, and I was perhaps not mistaken, that we had sprung from the lees of the Barbarians, from the scum of the great Invasions, from those hordes which, unable to pursue their march West, collapsed along the Carpathians and the Danube, somnolently squatting there, a mass of deserters on the Empire's confines, daubed with a touch of Latinity. With that past, this present. And this future. What an ordeal for my young arrogance! "How can one be a Rumanian?" was a question I could answer only by a constant mortification. Hating my people, my country, its timeless peasants enamored of their own torpor and almost bursting with hebetude, I blushed to be descended from them, repudiated them, rejected their sub-eternity, their larval certainties, their geologic reverie. No use scanning their features for the fidgets, the smirks of revolt: the monkey, alas! was dying in them. In truth, did they not sprout from the very rock? Unable to shove them aside, or to animate them, I came to the point of dreaming of an extermination. One does not massacre stones. The spectacle they offered me justified and baffled, nourished and disgusted my hysteria. And I never stopped cursing the accident that caused me to be born among them.

One great idea possessed them: the idea of destiny. I repudiated it with all my strength, saw in it nothing but the subterfuge of poltroons, an excuse for every abdication, an expression of common sense and its funereal philosophy. What could I cling to? My country whose existence, obviously, made no sense seemed to me a résumé of nothingness or a materialization of the inconceivable, a sort of Spain without its *Siglo de Oro,* without conquests or madness, and without a Don Quixote of our

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woes. To belong to it—what a lesson in humiliation and sarcasm, what a calamity, what a leprosy!

As for the great idea that prevailed there, I was too impertinent, too conceited to perceive its origin, its depth, or its experiences, the system of disasters which it supposed. I was not to understand it until much later. How it has insinuated itself to me, I do not know. When I was led to experience it lucidly, I became reconciled to my country which, *thereupon,* at last ceased to haunt me.

To exempt themselves from action, oppressed peoples entrust themselves to "fate," a negative salvation as well as a means of interpreting events: a philosophy of history *for daily use,* a determinist vision on an affective basis, a metaphysic of circumstance. . . .

If the Germans, too, are sensitive to destiny, they see it, nonetheless, not as a principle intervening from outside, but as a power which, emanating from their will, ends by escaping them and turning against them in order to crush them. Linked to their appetite for the demiurge, their *Schicksal* supposes a play of fatalities not so much within the world as within the self. Which comes down to saying that up to a certain point it depends on them.

To conceive destiny as exterior to ourselves, omnipotent and sovereign, a vast cycle of failures is requisite. A condition which my country fulfills to perfection. It would be indecent for Rumania to believe in effort, in the utility of action. Hence it does not believe in them and, out of propriety, resigns itself to the inevitable. I am grateful to it for having bequeathed me, with the code of despair, that *savoir-vivre,* that relaxation in the face of Necessity, as well as several impasses and the art of adjusting to them. Prompt to sustain my disappointments and to initiate my indolence into the secret of preserving them, my country has further offered me, in its eagerness to make me into a wastrel who keeps up appearances, the means of degrading myself without compromising myself too much. I owe it not only my finest, my surest failures, but also this talent for masking my cowardice and hoarding my compunctions. For how many other advantages am I not in its debt! Its titles to my gratitude are so numerous, in fact, that it would be boring to list them here.

Whatever good will I might have mustered, would I have been able, without my country, to waste my days in so exemplary a manner? It has helped me to do so, led me on, encouraged me. To spoil one's life, one forgets all too quickly, is not so easy: it takes a tradition, long training, the labor of several generations. This labor performed, everything goes to perfection. The certainty of Futility then forms part of

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your inheritance: it is a possession your ancestors have acquired for you by the sweat of their brow and at the cost of countless humiliations. And you profit by them, glory in them. As for your own humiliations, it will always be praiseworthy to embellish or evade them, to affect the manner of an elegant no-good, to be, honorably, the last among men. Politeness, the *custom* of misfortune, privilege of those who, born failures, have begun by their end. To know oneself of a breed which has never been is a bitterness alloyed with a certain sweetness, even a certain voluptuousness.

The exasperation I used to feel when I heard anyone say, apropos of one thing or another, "It's fate," now seems childish to me. I didn't realize then that I would come to do as much; that, taking shelter behind this syllable myself, I would ascribe to it good luck and bad, all the details of happiness and disaster; that, further, I would cling to Destiny with the ecstasy of a shipwrecked mariner, would address my first thoughts to it before flinging myself into the horror of each day. "You will vanish into space, O my Russia," Tyuchev exclaimed in the last century. I applied his exclamation with more suitability to my own country, differently constituted in order to be engulfed, provided with all the qualities of an ideal and anonymous victim. The habit of endless and pointless suffering, the plenitude of disaster—what an apprenticeship in the school of vanquished tribes! This is how the oldest Rumanian historian begins his chronicles: "It is not man who commands the times, but the times which command man." A crude formula, program and epitaph of one corner of Europe. To catch the tone of Balkan popular sensibility, one need only recall the lamentations of the chorus in Greek tragedy. By an unconscious tradition, a whole ethnic space was marked by it. Routine of the sigh and of calamity, jeremiads of minor peoples before the bestiality of the great! Yet let us be careful not to complain too much: is it not comforting to oppose to the world's disorders the coherence of our miseries and our defeats? And have we not, in the face of universal dilettantism, the consolation of possessing, with regard to pain, a professional competence?

E. M. Cioran

(*Translated from the French by Richard Howard*)

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WORLDS OF STYLE by Richard Poirier

[*Continued from Page 524*]

The situation can be described in terms of rather crude historical progression. It could be said that the theories of literary and stylistic independence, articulated if not originated by Emerson, were gradually transmuted into an ideal of heroic character asserting its independence of oppresive environments and of prefabricated social styles. So, too, the difficulties of Cooper and Emerson in achieving stylistic independence are translated, as it were, by Hawthorne, and increasingly by American novelists after him, into the central dramatic situation of their works. In this, as in many other ways, Salinger's Holden Caulfield is a merely stock character enacting the American hero's effort, more significantly illustrated by Isabel Archer, to express the natural self rather than merely to represent, in speech and manner, some preordained social type.

Defiance of convention by a writer in his style or by a character in his actions is necessarily part of the effort to create a new environment or to escape the confinements of an old one. Again, we can think of the sequence of American literature almost novelistically, each chapter modifying the concerns tentatively revealed in a previous one. Thus, when Cooper in 1828 remarks in *Notions of a Traveling Bachelor* that "it is quite obvious that, so far as taste and forms alone are concerned, the literature of England and that of America must be fashioned after the same models," he is rather passively describing a cultural situation that was later to be the provocation for Emerson's *The American Scholar* and for Whitman's *Democratic Vistas,* where forty-three years after Cooper, Whitman would still be complaining that "as yet America has artistically originated nothing." Cultural dependence in Mark Twain became the object of satire, though he was himself its victim, and it was fable-ized in Henry

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James's international novels, both early, in *The Europeans,* and late, in *The Ambassadors.* In summary, Cooper describes conditions which in Emerson fostered a myth of newness, a myth that gets enacted humanly by Huck Finn, a character whose consciousness exceeds the "styles" to which the book as well as Huck are ultimately forced to surrender.

Recognizing the chasm between a fully developed consciousness of self and the socially accepted styles by which that self can get expressed, Henry James developed a style which pays almost no deference to what we recognize as the language of ordinary social intercourse. It is a style that instead gives credence and support to extraordinary, almost grotesque expansions of consciousness, grotesque in the sense that the consciousness thus rendered is very often a mixture of James's own intrusive sensibility and the generally more limited ones of the characters of his later books. But even James was not able wholly to protect such heroes from questions prompted by the reader's commitment to a society and a language existent outside of James's books. There have, as a result, been endless debates about the significance in psychological and social terms of the renunciations of any customary forms of happiness at the end of nearly all his novels, noticeably at the end of *The Portrait of a Lady, The Spoils of Poynton, The Wings of the Dove* and *The Ambassadors.* The problem is evidence of the distinctive American quality of James. The crisis in the most interesting American works often occurs at those moments when the author tries to externalize the inner consciousness of his hero, tries to insert it, to borrow William James's metaphor, into social and verbal environments that won't sustain it. And the crisis is confronted not only by the heroes but also by their creators when it comes to conceiving of some possible resolution to the conflict of inner consciousness or some suitable external reward for it.

Describing the situation in images which most often embody it in American literature, we can say that American writers are at some point always forced to return their characters to prison. They return them to "reality" from environments where they have been allowed most "nakedly" to exist, environments created by various kinds of stylistic ingenuity. They "clothe" them and subject them to questions of a social and sexual nature which it has been their and their creator's intention to avoid. When Isaac, in Faulkner's *The Bear,* enters the

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woods as a boy of ten, for example, it is, we are told, as if he is going back in time, leaving any historically formed environment. He feels that he is witnessing his own birth, "the wagon progressing not by its own volition but by attrition of their intact yet fluid circumambience, drowsing, earless, almost lightless." This image is contrived to imitate the movement of a baby out of the womb and into the world, the hero's imagined denudation being a prelude not only to his eloquent later choice of what he calls "dispossession," but to the necessities which accompany that choice: of a lonely, sexless, childless life.

In a companion story to *The Bear, Delta Autumn,* Faulkner gives a savage rightness to the question asked of Isaac, now an old man, by the mulatto mistress of his nephew: what, she asks, can he know about love. The issue Faulkner recognizes here, and has the genius to exploit, is nearly everywhere a tension in American literature: the tension of bringing into conjunction the environment of nakedness, where there is no encumbrance to the expression of the true inner self, and the environment of costume, of outer space occupied by society and its fabrications. The utter simplicity of Gatsby's room is another example of what one might call the environment of inner space, intended to show the meaninglessness of the festooned life that Gatsby presents to the world. The configuration in Fitzgerald has already been anticipated, of course, in the nakedness enjoyed by Huck and Jim, when Huck does not have to go out in the disguises by which he "fits into" society. Similarly, a return to "nakedness" is also for Emerson the virtue of the woods: where "a man casts off his years as a snake his slough, and at what period soever of life is always a child," even while his own style has often a contrasting, sometimes debilitating "dress" and elegance. And while Thoreau is not generally credited with having had an influence on Henry James, it seems likely that in *The Portrait of a Lady,* Thoreau's disquisition on "Clothing" was on the periphery of James's satiric intention when, to Madame Merle's belief that "we are each of us made up of a cluster of appurtenances," he lets Isabel respond that

> "I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; on the contrary it's a limit, a barrier, and a per-

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fectly arbitrary one. Certainly the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don't express me; and heaven forbid they should!"

"You dress very well," interposed Madame Merle, skilfully.

"Possibly; but I don't care to be judged by that. My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with, it's not my own choice that I wear them; they are imposed upon me by society."

Madame Merle's answer–"Should you prefer to go without them?"–terminates the discussion. But meanwhile James shows his willingness consciously to expose his heroine to standards which usually embarrass those earlier American writers who share many of Isabel's ideas and indulge themselves in many of the images she also uses. Of course the Emersonianism here is Isabel's not James's, whose allegiances were, in any case, as much to the social as to the transcendental expressions of the self. But the passage nonetheless illustrates James's tenderness for ideals of *self*-expression as against expression by which the self is filtered through representative or acquired styles. This con-

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cern passes to him from Emerson (and James's father) through the whole body of American literature.

To a degree that forces on us a critically retrospective look at American literature, James recognizes the impossibility of "naked" self-expression, the illusion that, like Emerson's *Poet,* one can "turn the world to glass." In one sense his novels are about the disaster of assuming that within the environments provided by society there can be any allowance of space for the free expansion of the inner self. Opposed to any such translations and metamorphoses of the self are realities represented not only by the fashion of wearing clothing. Standing in opposition also are the fashions of language, the elemental social necessities of life implicit even in the agreement to use language in its inherited and publicly accepted forms.

There are two characteristics of language and of literature that are at odds with the Emersonian ideal of building a world of one's own. First of all, there is the acceptance by any writer, and conspicuously by Emerson himself, of certain decorums in his address to an imagined audience, of certain shared suppositions—"this is how an essay sounds" or "this is an acceptable voice for a novel." The "I" that is heard in the voice is therefore unlikely to be the same "I" that is projected by images of the liberated self or the Artist. Second, there is the convention in nineteenth-century fiction of dialogue, even if the dialogue is sometimes wholly recollected or imagined in a single mind. Subscription to the convention of dialogue means that in American fiction certain ideas that sound absurd in anything but monologue or soliloquy become the subject of conversation. Such dialogue, notably in Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville, is quite often pointlessly stilted and literary. It is as if these writers felt that dialogue was forced upon them. In some measure it was, since dialogue presupposes an accommodation to aspects of reality for which these writers have an evident distaste: the necessity of social intercourse, the acceptance of literary and social conventions in the definition of the Self, the acceptance of other selves *as* other. Cooper and Melville, for instance, want to believe in the possibility that the self can expand not merely in the presence of natural force but also in the company of other people, that the same self can carry on polite conversations and be, in one form or other, something as nonhuman as a "transparent eyeball."

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Stressing these essential facts about American literature, one has to confront some of the issues raised by Leslie Fiedler. I want to say at the outset that *Love and Death in the American Novel* is to my mind probably the best single book on American fiction ever written, and it is surely unsurpassed in its definition of Gothicism as a characteristic of that fiction. The book has been most resented for its purported emphasis on sexual perversity in American literature and in its use of this as an index to certain historical and cultural tensions. Actually Fiedler is altogether less daring and less insistent on this aspect of our literature than was Lawrence in his much earlier study, and he is in no sense as moralistic about sex as a literary component. If Huckleberry Finn were the boy next door, it would probably hurt him more to call him homoerotic than to call him Faustian, but Fiedler knows that as applied to fictional characters either designation is mythic, not accusatory. What he forgets is that either designation is also destructive of what Huck more particularly offers us in his style or in his contribution to a novel so full of the struggle for verbal consciousness. One of the troubles with Fiedler's argument is that it is often initiated by an emphasis on "character," as if "character" existed in nineteenth-century American fiction in the unfractured form it usually takes in English fiction of the same period. He can therefore insist on the significance of certain acts or words as if they refer to "character" and its psychological structure when more often these acts and words belong instead to some larger metaphorical significance in a work to which sexual psychology is merely incidental or irrelevant. Huck and Jim lying naked together on the raft are in fact looking less at each other than at the stars or the river; their nakedness expresses less about their feelings for each other than about their assertion of freedom, as necessary for the white boy as for the Negro slave, from the world of costume, of Style.

Fiedler's work is a brilliant example of mythopoeic criticism given its fullest exposition three years before *Love and Death in the American Novel* by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*. In Fiedler as in Frye is the assumption that mythopoeic and archetypal constructs have some existence more historically and scientifically demonstrable than the existence of a so-called text. The "text" thus becomes, as Fiedler is happy to assert, "merely one of the contexts of a piece of

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literature," though this creates a problem in semantics which it is not my responsibility here to unravel. Fiedler's methods are not essentially different from those of other commentators who are concerned with recurrences of literary motifs and with the elaboration of these into archetypes or myths. It may be more provocative but it is not more or less valid to reduce American literature to certain versions of sexual dislocation than to reduce it to versions of Eden, Christ or the Frontier. Because even granting the rewards of mythopoeic readings, one then wants to go on to something more exciting, to an investigation of the career of *topoi* in their passage through inhospitable verbal contexts, through conventions of expression and through literary structures that distort them, giving even to a commonplace romantic image of "nakedness" some peripheral suggestions of "innocent homosexuality." The suggestions *are* peripheral, however—a consequence of literary rather than psychological conditions. What is centrally important is the evidence almost everywhere in American literature of an idealistic effort to free the heroes' and the readers' consciousness from categories not only of conventional moralities but also of mythopoeic criticism.

The result is a struggle to create through language an environment in which the inner consciousness of the hero-poet can freely express itself, an environment in which he can sound publicly what he privately is. Emphasis on the element of struggle in giving even a temporary existence to this environment means that the archetypes, images, themes or ideas that have been the main concern of most recent studies of American literature are in this study only of incidental or procedural use. In treating such items as the "eye," "nakedness," "infancy," "newness," my concern is with the shapes given such images and ideas when they are under the pressure of various stylistic contexts. What immediately strikes a reader of almost any American classic, of which *Moby Dick* might be an example, is that his attention is grasped less by images or the significances attached to them, both being usually obvious and often banal, than by the peculiar archness with which they get expressed. *Moby Dick* is not written as cryptography but as mystery. The agitations of voice, the playfulness through which symbols emerge and then dissolve, the mixtures of incantatory, Biblical, polite and vernacular language in this and other

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American books—these are what demand our attention altogether more than do ideas or themes extracted by critics in the interest of tidying up what is mysterious or confused. Marius Bewley's title for a book on American literature, *The Eccentric Design,* therefore promises that he will come much nearer the central problems of that literature than does the title of a more recent book by Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder,* with its implied emphasis on intentions, on ways of perceiving in American literature rather than on ways of expressing what is perceived. However, Mr. Tanner's book turns out to be full of very rewarding speculations; it traces important continuities among American books with tact and unusual discrimination. What is more, he is alert to the problem of stylization, notably in vernacular literature and in the prose-poetry of Gertrude Stein and Henry James. But while showing us how "nearly all American writers have found it difficult to move beyond the first step [of seeing like children] to find satisfactory forms," he then admits that "this phenomenon poses a problem which is obviously beyond the scope of this book."

Meeting the problem, I share Mr. Tanner's nervousness. The critic who offers the most help is D. H. Lawrence in *Studies in Classic American Literature,* probably the crucial study of American literature. Such a claim can be justified even though the book manages to ignore Emerson, Mark Twain and Henry James. It illustrates how a work of critical genius can cover a subject even while neglecting large areas of it. The explanation, in this instance, is that Lawrence was himself by temperament an "American" writer working within the conventions of English literature. He was not only responsive to the main lines of force in American literature; he himself accelerated them. In Lawrence, with a degree of consciousness never attained by any American writer, are the struggles, difficulties and tensions that went into the writing of the best American books. So much did he feel these tensions that perhaps his clearest expression of them comes when he is talking not about American writing at all, but about his own. Thus in describing what he is trying to do in *Women in Love,* he speaks of that novel as an effort to find a mode of expression for ideas that are struggling into a life which language, and only language, can give them:

> Man struggles with his unborn needs and fulfilment. New un-

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> foldings struggle up in torment in him, as buds struggle forth from the midst of a plant. Any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along. This struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of life. It is not superimposition of a theory. It is the passionate struggle into conscious being.
>
> We are now in a period of crisis. Every man who is acutely alive is acutely wrestling with his own soul. The people that can bring forth the new passion, the new idea, this people will endure. Those others, that fix themselves in the old idea, will perish with the new life strangled unborn within them. Men must speak out to one another.
>
> In point of style, fault is often found with the continual, slightly modified repetition. The only answer is that it is natural to the author; and that every natural crisis in emotion or passion or understanding comes from this pulsing, frictional to-and-fro which works up to culmination.

The notion that to bring forth a new passion or a new idea involves verbal struggle against established forms is given a somewhat ironic confirmation by the fact that the notion is itself one of the most persistent conventions of literature. Stylistic revolution is not the exclusive product of any particular historical situation, or the exclusive property of any national literature. If it seems to belong to American writing at the time of Cooper and Emerson, it also belongs to the America of Hamlin Garland and later of Hemingway. If it belonged to English and American poetry when Pound wrote *Make It New*, to English poetry when Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote the Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, it also belonged to Samuel Daniel, some two hundred years earlier, when he announced the fitness of English for rhymed verse. When Gertrude Stein laid down the law that "A rose is a rose is a rose" she was being repetitious with an intention already described. She probably did not intend also to be almost directly repetitious of Emerson in *Self Reliance*:

> Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say "I think," "I am," but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my

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> window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose. . . .

In declaring the freedom of words from the significances which history has imposed on them even a writer as notoriously original as Miss Stein finds herself an imitator.

One struggle in American literature is to assert against conventional styles another kind of style that has been defined, out of Emerson and Whitman, by Louis Sullivan when he referred to style as "a consistent and definite expansion of pronounced personality." This struggle cannot wholly be explained simply by reference to some particular historical phenomenon, even one as staggering as the offering to men's imagination of a new world. All we can say is that American literature does offer the most persistent, the most poignantly heroic example of a recurrent literary compulsion, not at all confined to our literature, to believe in the possibilities of a new style. The new American style was meant to release hitherto unexpressed dimensions of the self into space where it would encounter none of the antagonistic social systems which stifle it in the more enclosed and cultivated spaces of England and of English books, the spaces from which Lawrence escaped to the American West.

Paradoxically, I know of no deeper penetration of this central core of American literature than D. H. Lawrence's *St. Mawr*. It might seem merely ingenious to expand a critical proposition about American writing, most of it of the nineteenth century, by analysis of a novella, an English novella at that, published in 1925. But in fact, criticism, including Lawrence's *Studies*, has nowhere confronted the problem I have been describing with anything like the comprehensive genius exhibited in *St. Mawr*. The story not only gives life to these problems; it also shows us, with a subtlety possible only, perhaps, in a fictional dramatization, their enormous literary consequences. Once again the struggles going on in American writing of the last century become the fictional subject of later, so-called modern literature: Lawrence demonstrates the difficulty, in environments conventionalized by social and literary formulations, of trying to find a voice, a personal style appropriate to what he calls in the

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story the "onward pushing spirit." Especially during that half of the story set in England, this personal voice tries to be heard within the environments not simply of social forms but also within a language and conversational mode derivative of them. Except for what can be borrowed from literature and myth, this social language is all his characters have as an instrument for defining that "spirit" and for entering into dialogue with it.

In another age, the author of this book would have been burned at the stake

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St. Mawr is a kind of gathering of the motifs we have so far been considering in classic American literature and which are to some extent defined in Lawrence's *Studies,* published over a year before, in 1923, but written within the period dating from 1917. Lawrence's immersion in American literature is everywhere evident in the story. The heroine, Lou Witt, living in England with her mother and married to an Australian named Rico, chooses, like many American heroes and heroines before her, to disassociate herself from a polite society and from a marriage, both parodied in the opening pages, and to find renewal in the wilderness. She retreats to the New Mexican desert, there to find a spirit "that wants her." The geographical movement of the story has obvious historical and literary precedents: from old to new worlds, from England (the "close, hedged-and-fenced English landscape. Everything enclosed, enclosed to stifling") to Mexico (where "The great circling landscape lived its own life"), from a land without the opportunities proffered by unfilled space ("Not a space, not a speck of this country that wasn't humanized, occupied by the human claim") to a landscape for which "man did not exist." But before this geographical evocation of two worlds, Lou has already contrived them in her imagination and has done so in a manner which, again, suggests a classic feature of American literature: when she first sees St. Mawr, an equestrian Moby Dick, a domesticated Big Ben, the horse "seemed to look at her out of another world." While imagining this "other" world, she can, like Thoreau, or Faulkner's heroes, or Hemingway in his sporting or hunting stories or Melville's Ahab, think of those around her in hierarchies that appeal not to social institutions but rather to the mysterious powers potent but thwarted in animal life. Lewis, the groom, thereby becomes elevated above her husband Rico, by "the aristocracy of invisible powers, the greater influences, nothing to do with human society."

Lou's effort to promote the secret powers of St. Mawr within the context of English mannered society can only find a voice in the first half of the story that is largely destructive and satiric. The burden of this satiric effort is at first carried mostly by her mother, Mrs. Witt. Her ironies are full of a self-loathing which Lou recognizes as a doomed alternative to the deadening social chic of her husband.

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But once St. Mawr has revealed himself in Texas as no more than a fawning stud, Lou finds in the landscape of New Mexico, in something no human being has tamed, a further call not merely to criticism of human society but to potencies beyond it. She tries to imagine for herself some creative alternative both to society and to the ironic-satiric treatment of it in which she had joined Mrs. Witt while both were entrapped within the terms and vocabularies of a social set. In a sense *St. Mawr* includes within itself the two attitudes toward existent environments which I've located in American literature: the one imitative, often satiric, often critical, but essentially submissive, in being merely corrective, to the necessary reality of established society; the other creative, daring, often ridiculous in the effort to express a creative ideal of alternative environment where the self can unite its powers with presumably harmonious natural forces.

Where Lawrence is most English in the story is in the degree to which even at the end he finds it necessary to be skeptical of the possibilities Lou is affirming. The skepticism expresses itself most noticeably in his never consorting fully with her tendencies as a symbolist: he himself never confirms the importance she assigns to St. Mawr or to the New Mexican landscape. Whatever support her symbolisms receive from his writing or from his narrative voice is in the marvelous beauty of his descriptions. If she is a symbolist, he more accurately displays what Gertrude Stein meant by remarking that "Description is explanation": the power and magnificance of landscape and of animal life is precisely, so Lawrence implies, that it is *not* available as metaphor. Lawrence's place in the book is a clarified version of Melville's in *Moby Dick* when it comes to his subscribing to the symbolist tendencies of the central character. Skepticism of this kind, however, need not and does not modify the grandeurs of description in which Melville and Lawrence like to indulge. The admiration of the writers in both cases goes not to the possible accuracy of a symbolist perspective but only to the heroic nobility of incentive behind it, its creative responsiveness to the things of this world.

In the tradition of American romantic literature, Lawrence values the redemptive power of imagination even when its particular exertions are preposterous. The effort, the struggle to change the

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world, to alter even the laws of nature here, as in Emerson and in all of James, brings rewards only to the imagination and to the consciousness of participants and witnesses, rewards without any practical benefit or visible objectification. The struggle may be with the alien forces in nature that Emerson did not feel it necessary to acknowledge so fully as did Melville, but it is also with those inheritances of old thinking, of old formulas and of language itself which Emerson continually laments, with no illusions that it is ever possibly fully to escape from them.

While most of what I would call the American aspects of *St. Mawr* are altogether implicit, Lawrence seems anxious almost to signal the similarities (and differences) between himself and Emerson in the interpolated story of the New England woman. The story testifies to the historical frequency as well as to the Americanness of the situation in which Lou finds herself at the end of *St. Mawr*. The woman's story suggests, for one thing, that the struggle of the heroic self for a congenial environment involves no simple geographical movement from the civilization of Europe to the wilderness of America. The old world has so efficiently claimed for itself the civilized areas of the new that the woman must move still further into the continent in search of harmony with natural rather than with social forces. With her husband, a man as unbelieving a witness to the spiritual benefits of the enterprise as is Mrs. Witt, the New England woman moved to the ranch, bringing to that wilderness a "New England belief in a world ultimately all for love," and an assurance that she can find confirmation of this belief in "nature." Trying like Deerslayer paradoxically to bring civilization to a wilderness which is also her retreat from civilization (she tries to introduce water taps and to exterminate the rats), she is quite explicitly defined by Lawrence as someone trying to create or to "build" a world in the face of savagery. Though she fails ("she could not even keep her speech") she represents for Lawrence the positive virtue of effort, of struggle for its own sake, against the killing extremes of system, on the one side, and, on the other, the lowest stages of savage creation. "And all the time," Lawrence writes in a voice which has none of the ironic tinge it usually carries in this story, "man has to rouse himself afresh, to cleanse the new accumulations of refuse. To win

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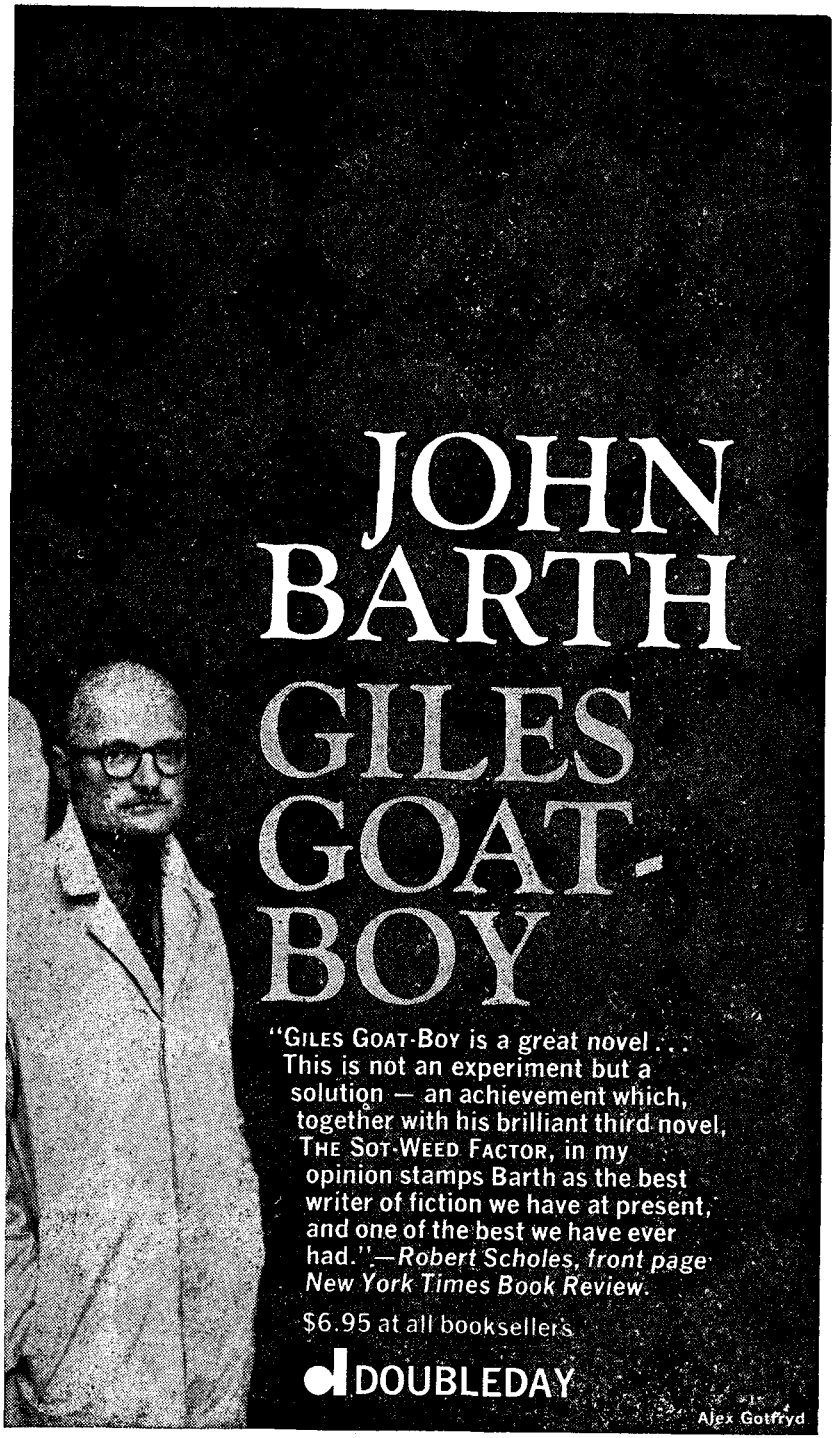
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from the crude wild nature the victory and the power to make another start, and to cleanse behind him the century-deep deposits of layer upon layer of refuse: even of tin cans." As in American literature, even the best efforts of the characters in Lawrence's fiction bring no practical benefits. Success is inward and invisible, an expansion of consciousness in the self. That this expansion on the part of the hero might ultimately have some renovating effect upon society is a hope more pronounced in Lawrence than in any American book that comes to mind, including Faulkner's *The Bear*. But some such renovation is implicit, in the very degree to which American writers strive in their styles, as Lawrence does, to be "poets," "liberating gods" of the confined consciousness of the reader.

St. Mawr is an astonishing feat in varieties and modulations of style precisely because Lawrence is so anxious to show how nearly impossible it is to be freed of those organizations of language, literary and social, within which human consciousness has chosen to define itself. He gives far greater proportionate attention to his characters' existence in language than to their sexual existence. At the end of *St. Mawr* it is made perhaps needlessly clear by the very name of the ranch—Las Chivas, or she-goats—and by the insistence on the pre-sexual horror of the savage landscape that Lou and her mother are paying a heavy human and psychological price, as do all similar American heroes, for their rejections and choices of environment.

Lawrence's irreducible Englishness is most apparent, however, in making Lou's situation significantly unlike that of any comparable American hero: at the end, communing with the landscape from which "stillness speaks," she is still not alone and must herself enter into human converse. Mrs. Witt is with her, is given indeed the final lines of the story. Thus at the very end Lou is forced into dialogue, into some definition of her inward state that makes some sense to the older, socially adept, practically minded woman. "Freedom" in Lawrence, for Lou as for Birkin, who tries to make sense of himself to Ursula at the end of *Women in Love*, "freedom" means, as he puts it, "freedom together." In this modification on the theme of retreat and solitude, Lawrence exposes his American tendencies to certain elemental biological and social realities that English fiction never completely eludes even in this century. There is in Lawrence

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no evasion of these realities either by allowing the hero to define himself in soliloquy, rather than in dialogue, or by a self-annihilating claim to Oneness or Allness. Whatever his characters express, even in talk to themselves, carries in its sounds some telltale mark of social place and history, some element of the established environment against which they and the book are still struggling at the end. Some of Lawrence's most grotesquely conventionalized types are allowed to pay verbal court to the Laurentian virtues, but their sounds, overstuffed with chic or "thinking" or academicism, betray them, as when Hermione delivers her classroom lecture in *Women in Love,* when Cartwright phrases his admiration for the god Pan, or when Laura talks to Lou about St. Mawr and about the "very few people one can talk *really* simply with."

The extraordinary degrees of modulation in the story, requiring altogether as much attention as would any comparable work of poetry like *The Waste Land*, is meant even at the very end to show that Lou cannot wholly escape the environment she has left behind her in Europe. Her final speech has in it the tainted sounds of the fashionableness and literariness we have heard in Laura and Cartwright:

> "Very well, daughter. You will probably spend your life keeping to yourself."
>
> "Do you think I mind! There's something else for me, mother. There's something else even that loves me and wants me. I can't tell you what it is. It's a spirit. And it's here, on this ranch. It's here, in this landscape. It's something more real to me than men are, and it soothes me, and it holds me up. I don't know what it is, definitely. It's something wild, that will hurt me sometimes and will wear me down sometimes. I know it. But it's something big, bigger than men, bigger than people, bigger than religion. It's something to do with wild America. And it's something to do with me. It's a mission, if you like. I am imbecile enough for that!—But it's my mission to keep myself for the spirit that is wild, and has waited so long here: even waited for such as me. Now I've come! Now I'm here: Now I am where I want to be: with the spirit that wants me.—And that's how it is. And neither Rico nor Phoenix nor anybody else really matters to me. They are in the world's back yard. And I am

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here, right deep in America, where there's a wild spirit wants me, a wild spirit more than men. And it doesn't want to save me either. It needs me. It craves for me. And to it, my sex is deep and sacred, deeper than I am, with a deep nature aware deep down of my sex. It saves me from cheapness, mother. And even you could never do that for me."

Mrs. Witt rose to her feet, and stood looking far, far away, at the turquoise ridge of mountains half sunk under the horizon.

"How much did you say you paid for Las Chivas?" she asked.

"Twelve hundred dollars," said Lou, surprised.

"Then I call it cheap, considering all there is to it: even the name."

Mrs. Witt's deflationary remark is occasioned by her perception of the floundering repetitiveness, the school-girl vagueness by which Lou expresses a yearning which Lawrence in any case wants us to recognize as a commonplace of American literature. By now the reader compassionately knows that the failings in Lou's speech are a sign of her heroic struggle, in which Lawrence shares, for "verbal consciousness." Her verbal situation is made explicit in an earlier passage describing Mrs. Witt's:

> The visible world, and the invisible. Or rather, the audible and the inaudible. She had lived so long, and so completely, in the visible, audible world. She would not easily admit that other, inaudible. She always wanted to jeer, as she approached the brink of it.

At a similar "brink," Lou refuses to become merely the social satirist; she takes the risk of showing herself vulnerable and entrapped, as under the circumstances she must be. Like the New England woman and like other heroes of her nationality, she is trying to do something in itself impossible: to live only within the freedom of that reality which her own consciousness has created:

> And if it had been a question simply of living through the eyes, into the *distance,* then this would have been Paradise, and the little New England woman on her ranch would have found what she was always looking for, the earthly paradise of the spirit.
>
> But even a woman cannot live only into the distance, the beyond. Willy-nilly she finds herself juxtaposed to the near things,

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the thing in itself. And willy-nilly she is caught up into the fight with the immediate object.

The impossibility of living through the "eye" is the impossibility of totally divorcing the self from time, biology, economics and the words by which the free, visionary environment of the "eye" is translated into that social entity: the "I," living in relation to "near things." Lawrence here recognizes that Lou's dilemma for anyone determined to make it the subject of literature, imposes nearly insuperable problems of expression. The recognition is not itself an accomplishment. Emerson had long before articulated it in *The Poet* and *The Transcendentalist.* What distinguishes Lawrence is his refusal to evade in his writing the difficulties of which he is also a theoretician. Only a few American writers, similarly concerned with the invisible and inaudible world, deserve to be so honored.

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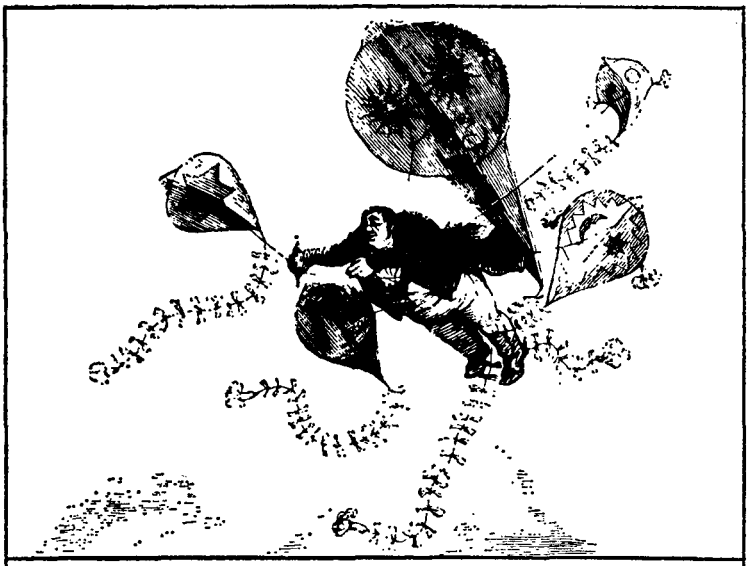

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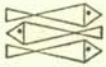

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